













# ANTHOLOGIA SACRA;

OR,

## SELECT THEOLOGICAL EXTRACTS,

ON SUBJECTS

PRACTICAL, AND EXPERIMENTAL;

SELECTED AND ARRANGED

BY THE REV. BERNARD GILPIN, M. A.,

RECTOR OF ST. ANDREW, HERTFORD;

AND

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HON. F. I. C. CIVIL SERVICE.

It would be an inestimable benefit, if instead of so many volumes, which require the greatest part of our lives to read, we had a summary of the choice truths of our religion, divested of needless words.

J. DESPAGNE.

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# ANTHOLOGIA SACRA;

## OR

### SELECT THEOLOGICAL EXTRACTS.

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#### PART II.—PRACTICAL.

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##### SECTION I.—SPECIOUS AND DECEPTIVE VIEWS OF RELIGION.

###### *Inefficacy of mere speculative Religion.*

TO come then to our business without further compliment, let us examine our ways, and consider impartially, what the religion of most men is.

We are baptised in our infancy, that is, as I conceive, dedicated and devoted to God's service, by our parents and the church, as young Samuel was by his mother Hannah; and there we take a solemn vow, 'to forsake the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory of the world, with all the covetous desires of it; to forsake also the carnal desires of the flesh, and not to follow nor be led by them.' This vow we take when we be children, and understand it not; and how many are there, who know, and consider, and regard what they have vowed, when they are become men, almost as little as they did being children! Consider the lives and public actions of most men of all conditions, in court, city, and country, and then deny it, if you can, that those three things, which we have renounced in our baptism, the profits, honors, and pleasures of the world, are the very gods which divide the world amongst them; are served more devoutly, confided in more heartily, loved more affectionately, than the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in whose name we are baptised: deny, if you can, the daily and constant employment of all men to be either a violent prosecution of the vain pomp and glory of the world; or of the power, riches, and contemptible profits of it, or of the momentary or unsatisfying pleasures of the flesh, or else of the more

diabolical humors of pride, malice, revenge, and such-like; and yet with this empty form we please and satisfy ourselves, as well as if we were lively born again by the Spirit of God, not knowing or not regarding what St. Peter has taught us, that the baptism, which must save us, is, *not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience unto God*, 1 Pet. iii. 21.

When we are come to years capable of instruction, many, which is lamentable to consider, are so little regarded by themselves or others, that they continue little better than pagans in a commonwealth of Christians, and know little more of God, or of Christ, than if they had been bred in the Indies. A lamentable case, and which will one day lie heavy upon their account, which might have amended it, and did not. But many, I confess, are taught to act over this play of religion and learning, to say, *Our Father, which art in heaven*; and, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty;' but where are the men that live so, as if they did believe in earnest, that God is their Almighty Father? Where are they that fear him, and trust in him, and depend upon him only for their whole happiness, and love him, and obey him, as in reason we ought to do to an Almighty Father; who, if he be our Father, and we be indeed his children, will do for us all the good he can; and, if he be Almighty, can do for us all the good he will; and yet, how few are there, who love him with half that affection as children usually do their parents, or believe him with half that simplicity, or serve him with half that dili-

gence? And then, for the Lord's Prayer, the plain truth is, we lie unto God for the most part clean through it; and, for want of desiring indeed, what in word we pray for, tell him to his face as many false tales as we make petitions. For who shews by his endeavours, that he desires heartily that God's name should be hallowed, that is, holily and religiously worshipped and adored by all men? That his kingdom shall be advanced and enlarged; that his blessed will should be universally obeyed? Who shews, by his forsaking sin, that he desires, so much as he should do, the forgiveness of it? Nay, who doth not revenge, upon all occasions, the affronts, contempts, and injuries put upon him, and so upon the matter curse himself, as often as he says, *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* How few depend upon God only for their *daily bread*, viz. the good things of this life, as upon the only Giver of them, so as neither to get nor keep any of them, by any means, which they know or fear to be offensive unto God? How few desire in earnest to avoid temptation? Nay, who almost is there, that takes not the devil's office out of his hand, and is not himself a tempter both to himself and others? Lastly, Who almost is there that desires heartily, and above all things, so much as the thing deserves, to be delivered from the greatest evil; sin, I mean, and the anger of God? Now, beloved, this is certain; he that employs not requisite industry, to obtain what he pretends to desire, does not desire indeed, but only pretends to do so: he that desires not what he prays for, prays with tongue only, and not with his heart; indeed, does not pray at all. And yet this is all which men generally do, and therefore herein also accomplish this prophecy, *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.*

And this were ill enough, were it in private; but we abuse God Almighty also with our public and solemn formalities; we make the church a stage whereon to act our parts, and play our pageantry; there we make a profession every day of confessing our sins 'with humble, lowly, and obedient hearts;' and yet, when we have talked after this manner, twenty, thirty, forty years together, our hearts for the most part continue as proud, as impenitent, as disobedient, as they were in the beginning. We make great protestations, 'when we

assemble and meet together to render thanks to God Almighty, for the benefits received at his hands;' and if this were to be performed with words, with hosannas and hallelujahs, and psalms, and hymns, and such-like outward matters, peradventure we should do it very sufficiently; but, in the mean time, with our lives and actions we provoke the Almighty, and that to his face, with all variety of grievous and bitter provocations; we do 'daily and hourly such things as we know, and he hath assured us, to be as odious unto him, and contrary to his nature, as any thing in the world is to the nature of any man in the world; and all this upon poor, trifling, trivial, no temptations. If a man, whom you have dealt well with, should deal so with you, one whom you had redeemed from slavery, and instated in some good inheritance, should make you fine speeches, entertain you with panegyrics, and have your praises always in his mouth; but all this while do nothing that pleases you, but, upon all occasions, put all affronts and indignities upon you: would you say this were a thankful man? Would you not detest him almost as much for his fair speeches as his foul actions? Beloved, such is our unthankfulness to our God and Creator, to our Lord and Saviour: our tongues ingeminate, and cry aloud, *Hosanna, hosanna*; but the louder voice of our lives and actions is, *Crucify him, crucify him.* We court God Almighty, and compliment with him, and profess to esteem his service perfect freedom; but if any thing be to be done, much more if any thing be to be suffered for him, here we leave him. We bow the knee before him, and put a reed in his hand, and a crown upon his head, and cry, *Hail, King of the Jews*: but then, with our customary sins, we give him gall to eat, and vinegar to drink; we thrust a spear in his side, nail him to the cross, and crucify to ourselves the Lord of glory. . . . To be thankful to God, is not to say, God be praised, or, God be thanked; but to remember what he desires, and execute what he commands. To be thankful to God, is certainly to love him, and to love him is to keep his commandments: so saith our Saviour, John xix., *If ye love me, keep my commandments.* If we do so, we may justly pretend to thankfulness; which, believe me, is not a word, nor to be performed with words: but, if we do not so,

as generally we do not, our talk of thankfulness is nothing else but mere talk, and we accomplish St. Paul's prophecy herein also; having a form of thankfulness, but not the reality, nor the power of it. If I should reckon up unto you, how many direct lies every wicked man tells to God Almighty as often as he says Amen to this *form of godliness*, which our church hath prescribed; if I should present unto you all our acting of piety, and playing of humiliation, and personating of devotion, in the psalms, the litanies, the collects, and generally in the whole service, I should be infinite.

CHILLINGWORTH.

*The Worldly Man's notion of Religion exposed.*

It is amazing to think, with what vanity of mind the most weighty things of religion are entertained amongst Christians. Things that should swallow up our souls, drink up our spirits, are heard as a tale that is told; disregarded by most, scorned by too many. What can be spoken so important, or of so tremendous consequence, or of so confessed truth, or with so awful solemnity and premised mention of the sacred name of the Lord, as not to find either a very slight entertainment or contemptuous rejection; and this by persons avowing themselves Christians? We seem to have little or no advantage, in urging men upon their own principles, and with things they most readily and professedly assent to. Their hearts are as much untouched, and void of impression by the Christian doctrine, as if they were of another religion. How unlike is the Christian world to the Christian doctrine! The seal is fair and excellent, but the impression is languid, or not visible. Where is that serious godliness, that heavenliness, that purity, that spirituality, that righteousness, that peace, unto which the Christian religion is most aptly designed to work and form the spirits of men? We think to be saved by an empty name; and glory in the show and appearance of that, the life and power whereof we hate and deride. It is a reproach with us not to be called a Christian, and a greater reproach to be one. If such and such doctrines obtain not in our professed belief, we are heretics or infidels; if they do in our practice, we are precisians and fools. To be so serious, and circumspect, and strict, and holy, to make the practice of godliness so

much our business, as the known and avowed principles of our religion do plainly exact from us, (yea, though we come, as we cannot but do, unspeakably short of that required measure,) is to make one's self a common derision and scorn. Not to be professedly religious, is barbarous; to be so in good earnest, ridiculous. In other things, men are wont to act and practise according to the known rules of their several callings and professions, and he would be reckoned the common fool of the neighbourhood, that should not do so: the husbandman, that should sow when others reap, or contrive his harvest into the depth of winter, or sow fitches, and expect to reap wheat; the merchant, that should venture abroad his most precious commodities in a leaky bottom, without pilot or compass, or to places not likely to afford him any valuable return. In religion only it must be accounted absurd, to be and do according to its known agreed principles, and he a fool, that shall but practise as all about him profess to believe. Lord! whence is this apprehended inconsistency between the profession and practice of religion? what hath thus stupified and unmanned the world, that seriousness in religion should be thought the character of a fool? that men must visibly make a mockery of the most fundamental articles of faith, only to save their reputation, and be afraid to be serious, lest they should be thought mad! Were the doctrine here opened believed in earnest, were the due, proper impress of it upon our spirits, or (as the pagan moralist's expression is) were our minds transfigured into it; what manner of persons should we be in all holy conversation and godliness? But it is thought enough to have it in our creed, though never in our hearts; and such as will not deride the holiness it should produce, yet endeavour it not, nor go about to apply and urge truths upon their own souls to any such purpose. What should turn into grace, and spirit, and life, turns all into notion and talk; and men think all is well, if their heads be filled, and their tongues tip, with what should transform their souls, and govern their lives. . . .

*Thy words were found, and I did eat them, saith the prophet, and thy word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.* Divine truth is only so far at present grateful, or useful for future, as it is received



by faith and consideration, and in the love thereof into the very heart, and there turned in *succum et sanguinem*—into *real nutriment of the soul*: so shall man live by the word of God. Hence is the application of it, both personal and ministerial, of so great necessity. If the truths of the Gospel were of the same alloy with some parts of philosophy, whose end is attained as soon as they are known; if the Scripture doctrine (the whole entire system of it) were not a doctrine after godliness; if it were not designed to sanctify and make men holy, or if the hearts of men did not reluctantly, were easily receptive of its impressions; our work were as soon done, as such a doctrine were nakedly proposed: but the state of the case in these respects is known and evident. The tenor and aspect of Gospel-truth speaks its end; and experience too plainly speaks the oppositeness of men's spirits. All, therefore, we read and hear, is lost, if it be not urgently applied: the Lord grant it be not then too.

REV. JOHN HOWE.

#### *The Modern False System of Morality.*

I CANNOT forbear remarking a great change which has taken place in the whole manner of reason on the topics of morality and religion, from what prevailed in the last century, and, as far as my information extends, in any preceding age. This, which is an age of revolutions, has also produced a strange revolution in the method of viewing these subjects, the most important by far that can engage the attention of man. The simplicity of our ancestors, nourished by the sincere milk of the word, rather than by the ténets of a disputatious philosophy, was content to let morality remain on the firm basis of the dictates of conscience and the will of God. They considered virtue as something *ultimate*, as bounding the mental prospect. They never supposed for a moment there was any thing to which it stood merely in the relation of a *means*, or that within the narrow confines of this momentary state, any thing great enough could be found to be its *end* or *object*. It never occurred to their imagination, that that religion which professes to render us superior to the world, is in reality nothing more than an instrument to procure the temporal, the physical good of individuals, or of society. In their view it had a nobler

destination; it looked forward to eternity: and if ever they appear to have assigned it any end or object beyond itself, it was an union with its Author, in the perpetual fruition of God. They arranged these things in the following order:—Religion, comprehending the love, fear, and service of the Author of our being, they placed first; social morality, founded on its dictates, confirmed by its sanctions, next; and the mere physical good of society they contemplated as subordinate to both. Every thing is now reversed. The pyramid is inverted; the first is last, and the last first. Religion is degraded from its pre-eminence, into the mere handmaid of social morality; social morality into an instrument of advancing the welfare of society; and the world is all in all. Nor have we deviated less from the example of antiquity than from that of our pious forefathers. The philosophers of antiquity, in the absence of superior light, consulted with reverence the permanent principles of nature, the dictates of conscience, and the best feelings of the heart, which they employed all the powers of reason and eloquence to unfold, to adorn, to enforce; and thereby formed a luminous commentary *on the law written on the heart*. The virtue which they inculcated, grew out of the stock of human nature: it was a warm and living virtue. It was the moral man, possessing in every limb and feature, in all its figure and movements, the harmony, dignity, and variety which belong to the human form: an effort of unassisted nature to restore that image of God, which sin had mutilated and defaced. Imperfect, as might be expected, their morality was often erroneous; but in its great outlines it had all the stability of the human constitution, and its fundamental principles were coeval and coexistent with human nature. There could be nothing fluctuating and arbitrary in its more weighty decisions, since it appealed every moment to 'the man within the breast;' it pretended to nothing more than to give voice and articulation to the inward sentiments of the heart, and conscience echoed to its oracles. This, wrought into indifferent systems, and under various modes of illustration, was the general form which morality exhibited from the creation of the world till our time. In this state Revelation found it; and, correcting what was erroneous, supplying what was

defective, and confirming what was right by its peculiar sanctions, superadded a number of supernatural truths and holy mysteries. How is it, that on a subject on which men have thought deeply from the moment they began to think, and where, consequently, whatever is entirely and fundamentally new, must be fundamentally false, how is it that in contempt of the experience of past ages, and of all precedents human and divine, we have ventured into a perilous path which no eye has explored, no foot has trod; and have undertaken, after a lapse of six thousand years, to *manufacture* a morality of our own, to decide by a cold calculation of interest, by a ledger-book of profit and loss, the preference of truth to falsehood, of piety to blasphemy, and of humanity and justice to treachery and blood?

In the science of morals we are taught by this system to consider nothing as yet done; we are invited to erect a fresh fabric on a fresh foundation. All the elements and sentiments, which entered into the essence of virtue before, are melted down and cast into a new mould. Instead of appealing to any internal principle, every thing is left to calculation, and determined by expediency. In executing this plan, the jurisdiction of conscience is abolished, her decisions are classed with those of a superannuated judge, and the determination of moral causes is adjourned from the interior tribunal to the noisy forum of speculative debate. Every thing without exception is made an affair of calculation, under which are comprehended not merely the duties we owe to our fellow-creatures, but even the love and adoration which the Supreme Being claims at our hands. His claims are set aside, or suffered to lie in abeyance, until it can be determined how far they can be admitted on the principles of expediency, and in what respect they may interfere with the acquisition of temporal advantages. Even here, nothing is yielded to the suggestions of conscience, nothing to the movements of the heart: all is dealt out with a sparing hand, under the stint and measure of calculation. Instead of being allowed to love God with all our heart, and all our strength, the first and great commandment, the portion of love assigned him is weighed out with the utmost scrupulosity, and the supposed excess more severely censured than the real deficiency.

Thus, by a strange inversion, the *indirect influence* of Christianity, in promoting the temporal good of mankind, is mistaken for its *principal end*; the skirts of her robe are confounded with her body, and the *powers of the world to come*, instead of raising our thoughts and contemplations from earth to heaven, from the creature to the Creator, are made subservient to the advancement of secular interests and passions. How far these sentiments accord with the dictates of inspiration, the most unlettered Christian may easily decide. *Love not the world*, said the disciple who leaned on the breast of his Lord, *neither the things that are in the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. And the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* Such was the idea entertained by an inspired Apostle of Christian virtue. Let us now turn to the modern philosopher. Virtue, he will inform us, (including the whole sum of our duties) is merely an expedient for promoting the interests and advantages of the *present world*, of that world, which, in the eyes of John, was passing away, and whose value he so solemnly depreciates. What admirable consistency! What elevated theology! If we can suppose this holy Apostle acquainted with what passes on earth, what pleasure it must afford his glorified spirit, to find his sentiments so well understood, and so faithfully interpreted!

In former times it was supposed that one of the most effectual means of improvement in virtue was, the moral culture of the heart; and to *keep it with all diligence, because out of it are the issues of life*, was thought an advice deserving the most serious attention. To examine frequently the state of the conscience, and to check the first risings of disorder there, was judged to be of the last importance.

It is easy to see how this moral discipline must fare under the doctrine of expediency, a doctrine which teaches man to be looking continually abroad: a doctrine which not only justifies, but enjoins a distrust of the suggestions of the inward monitor; which will not permit the best feelings of the heart, its clearest dictates, its finest emotions, to have the smallest influence over the conduct; and instead

of yielding any thing to their direction, cites them at its bar.

As this fashion of reducing every moral question to a calculation of expediency is a most important innovation, it would be strange if it had not produced a change in the manners of society. In fact it *has* produced an entirely new cast of character, equally remote from the licentious gaiety of high life, and the low profligacy which falls under the lash of the law: a race of men distinguished by a calm and terrible ferocity, resembling Cæsar in this only, that, as it was said of him, they have come with sobriety to the ruin of their country. The greatest crimes no longer issue from the strongest passions, but from the coolest head. Vice and impiety have made a new conquest, and have added the regions of speculation to their dominion. The patrons of impurity and licentiousness have put on the cloak of the philosopher: maxims the most licentious have found their way into books of pretended morality, and have been inculcated with the airs of a moral sage.\* The new doctrine having withdrawn the attention from all internal sentiments as well as destroyed their authority, the distinction between right and wrong was easily lost sight of, the boundaries of vice and virtue confounded, and the whole substance of morals fell a prey to contending disputants. Nor is this the only or the worst consequence which has followed. A callous indifference to all moral distinctions is an almost inseparable effect of the familiar application of this theory. Virtue is no longer contemplated as the object of any particular *sentiment* or *feeling*, but solely with regard to its effects on society: it is what it *produces*, not what it *is*, that is alone considered, just as an accountant is indifferent to the *shape* and *appearance* of the figures, and attends simply to their amount. Crimes and virtues are equally *candidates* for approbation, nor must the heart betray the least preference, which would be to prejudge the cause: but must maintain a sacred neutrality till expedience, whose hand never trembles in the midst of the greatest horrors, has weighed in her impartial balance their consequences and effects. In the mean time, they are equally *candidates*, we repeat it again, for our approbation, and equally entitled to

it, provided the passions can be deceived into an opinion, and this is not difficult, that they will come to the same thing at the foot of the account. Hence that intrepidity in guilt, which has cased the hearts of the greatest adepts in this system, as with triple brass. Its seeds were sown by some of these with an unsparing hand in France, a congenial soil, where they produced a thick vegetation. The consequences were soon felt. The fabric of society tottered to its base, the earth shook under their feet, the heavens were involved in darkness, and a voice more audible than thunder called upon them to desist. But, unmoved amidst the uproar of elements, undismayed by that voice which astonishes nature and appals the guilty, these men continued absorbed in their calculations. Instead of revering the judgments, or confessing the finger of God, they only made more haste (still on the principle of expediency,) to desolate his works, and destroy his image, as if they were apprehensive the shades of a premature night might fall and cover their victims!

REV. R. HALL.

*Christianity consists not in mere Morality and half Reforms.*

IN the ordinary sacrifices of the old law, God was content to share part of them, with his servants the priests, and challenged only the inwards as his own due. And proportionably in the spiritual sacrifices, his claim was, *My son, give me thine heart*. He was tender then in exacting all his due. It was only a temptation, we know, when God required of Abraham, that his only son Isaac should be offered in *holocaustum*, for a whole burnt sacrifice, to be utterly consumed, so that no part nor relics should remain of so beloved a sacrifice; yet even in those old times, there were whole burnt-offerings; whereby (besides that one oblation of Christ) was prefigured likewise our giving up our whole selves, souls and bodies, as a living, reasonable sacrifice unto God. And, therefore, our Saviour Christ, (who came to fulfil the law, not only by his obedience thereto, but also by his perfect and complete expression of its force and meaning,) doth in plain terms resolutely and peremptorily exact from all them that purpose to follow him, a full, perfect resignation of themselves to his

\* The unholty speculations of Mr. Godwin were founded entirely on this basis.

disposing, without all manner of condition or reservation.

This was a doctrine never heard of in the world before completely delivered. Never did any prophet or scribe urge or enforce so much upon God's people, as is herein contained. Yet, in the evangelical law, we have it precisely, and accurately pressed; insomuch, that the Holy Spirit of God has taken up almost all the metaphors that can possibly be imagined, the more forcibly to urge this so necessary a doctrine.

We are commanded so perfectly and wholly to devote ourselves to God's service; so earnestly and resolutely to undertake his commands, that we must determine to undervalue and despise all earthly and transitory things besides: nay, from the bottom of our hearts we must hate and detest all things (how gainful, or delightful, or necessary soever they seem), if they do in any measure hinder or oppugn us in our journey to Christ.

We must not so much as look upon Christ, or glance our eyes upon his glorious mercy, expressing in suffering and satisfying for us, (for St. Luke calls this *θεωπία*;) but we must resolve to keep them there fixed, and not deign to think any creature to be a spectacle worthy our looking on: ἀφορῶντες εἰς Ἰησοῦν, saith St. Paul, Heb. xii. 2. We have no English term that can fully express the force of this word; for it is not only, as we have it translated, *looking unto Christ*, but taking off our speculations from other objects, and fastening them upon Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

When we have been once acquainted, though but imperfectly, with this saving knowledge, we must straight bring our understandings into captivity unto the obedience thereof; and whatsoever other speculations we have, how delightful soever they be unto us, yet rather than they should over-leaven us, and (as knowledge without charity is apt to do) puff us up, we must, with much greater care and industry, study to forget them, and resolve, with St. Paul, to know nothing, *save Jesus Christ and him crucified*.

CHILLINGWORTH.

Consider, that there may be some gradual tendencies, or fainter essays towards godliness, that fall short of real godliness, or come not up to that thorough change

and determination of heart God-ward, that is necessary to blessedness. There may be a returning, but not to the Most High, wherein man may be (as the prophet immediately subjoins, Hos. vii. 16.) *like a deceitful bow*, not fully bent, that will not reach the mark; they come not home to God. Many may be almost persuaded; and even within reach of heaven, not far from the kingdom of God; may seek to enter, and not be able; their hearts being somewhat inclinable, but more averse; for they can only be unable as they are unwilling. The soul is in no possibility of taking up a complacent rest in God, till it be brought to this, to move toward him spontaneously, and with, as it were, a self-motion. And then is it self-moved towards God, when its preponderating bent is towards him. As a massy stone that one attempts to displace, if it be heaved at till it preponderate, it then moves out by its own weight; otherwise it reverts, and lies where and as it did before. So it is with many men's hearts—all our lifting at them, is but the rolling of the returning stone; they are moved, but not removed: sometimes they are lifted at in the public ministry of the world; sometimes by a private, seasonable admonition; sometimes God makes an affliction his minister; a danger startles them; a sickness shakes them; and they think to change their course: but how soon do they change those thoughts, and are where they were? What enlightenings and convictions, what awakenings and terror, what remorse, what purposes, what tastes and relishes do some find in their own hearts, that yet are blasted and come to nothing? . . . No gracious principle but may have its counterfeit in an ungracious heart; whence they deceive not others only, but themselves, and think verily they are true converts while they are yet in their sins. How many wretched souls, that lie dubiously struggling a long time under the contrary alternate impressions of the Gospel on the one hand, and the present evil world on the other,—and give the day to their own sensual inclinations at last,—in some degree escape the corruptions of the world, by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, but are *again entangled and overcome, so as their latter end is worse than their beginning*, 2 Pet. ii. 20. Such a man is so far from being advantaged by his former faint inclinations towards God, that he would be

found at last under this aggravated wickedness beyond all other men; that when others wandered from God through inadvertency and inconsideration, this man will be found to have been his enemy upon deliberation, and against the various strivings of his convinced heart to the contrary. This is more eminently victorious and reigning enmity; such a one takes great pains to perish. Alas! it is not a slight touch, an overly superficial tincture, some evanid sentiments of piety, a few good thoughts or wishes, that bespeak a new man, a new creature. It is a thorough prevailing change, that quite alters the habitual posture of a man's soul, and determines it towards God, so as that the after-course of his life may be capable of that denomination, a living to God, a living after the Spirit; that exalts the love of God unto that supremacy in him, that it becomes the governing principle of his life, and the reason and measure of his actions; that as he loves him above all things else, better than his own life, so he can truly (though possibly sometimes with a doubtful, trembling heart) resolve the ordinary course of his daily walking and practice into that love, as the directive principle of it. I pray, I read, I hear, because I love God. I desire to be just, sober, charitable, meek, patient, because I love God. This is the perfection and end of the love of God, (therefore that must needs be the principle hereof) obedience to his will, 1 John ii. 5. Herein appears that power of godliness, denied (God knows) by too many that have the form: *the spirit of love, power, and of a sound mind*, 2 Tim. iii. 5; chap. i. 7. That only is a sound mind, in which such love rules in such power.

REV. JOHN HOWE.

People in general hold, that all religion consists in mere practice, or in works; and that Christianity is comprised in good works, or, at least, that this doctrine of morality is the principal part, and even the foundation of religion. These maxims are very plausible. Upon this ground faith, knowledge, and prophecy, are represented as qualities totally useless, without deeds of charity. The most ignorant become great orators on such occasions, and declaim elegantly in praise of good works, which, indeed, cannot be too much recommended; but, this enormous error, of making religion a mere doctrine of moral-

ity, is of much greater consequence than they imagine. The doctrine of religion consists of two parts; the former shews what God hath done for man—the latter teaches what man ought to do for God. This first part is the genuine and essential character which distinguishes the Christian religion from all others, for there is no false religion which does not teach good works. But to teach what God hath done for us in the work of Redemption, is a doctrine to be found in the Christian religion alone. The real essence of Christianity lies in this first part; for all other religions teach salvation by the works of man toward God, but our religion teaches salvation, as the work of God toward man.

The greatest corruption, that hath ever crept into the church, began with the use of these maxims, which recommend moral doctrine as the whole substance of religion. For Christianity was thus ultimately reduced to morality. If we observe the consequences of divers opinions lately introduced, it will appear that they all terminate in this point.

It is impious to affirm that the doctrine of works is the foundation of religion; for salvation, which is the true subject of religion, is grounded upon the good which God bestows upon us, not upon the good that we do. Hence it follows, that morality is not the fundamental doctrine of Christianity: on the contrary, that part of it which we call morality, is built upon the grace of God. It is, therefore, a very rash assertion to maintain, that the doctrine which treats of morals, is the most excellent part of religion. All Christian virtues are effects of Sanctification, which is a work of God. Without salvation, which is the first part, all our morality is dark and heathenish. It is a great error to believe, that to be a good moralist is sufficient to be a good Christian.

It is a prejudice natural to man, in speaking of the means of obtaining salvation, to think immediately of works, as the real efficient cause of it. The Jews, taking this for granted, asked our Saviour about the nature only of works, John vi. 28. All men, except Christians, ground their hopes upon works, not being able to conceive any other merit as the means of salvation. This principle is natural, having been engraven on the heart of man, from his creation, namely, that he should obtain eternal life by his works; which was

true in the state of innocence; for works then would have produced ~~this~~ effect, if man had not lost his strength. And he still rests upon that principle, of which he has retained the impression, though the fall, having deprived him of strength, discovers to him plainly the vanity of his pretensions. This source did not merely give rise to the opinions which attribute salvation to the efficacy of works, but also to the vulgar ideas of such, who, though they acknowledge the insufficiency of works in this respect, yet raise their value so highly, as even to think it more excellent to preach modesty in apparel, than to teach the mysteries of the Gospel.

J. DESPAGNE.

There is a religion which is too sincere for hypocrisy, but too transient to be profitable; too superficial to reach the heart, too unproductive to proceed from it. It is slight, but, as far as it goes, not false. It has discernment enough to distinguish sin, but not firmness enough to oppose it; compunction sufficient to soften the heart, but not vigour sufficient to reform it. It laments when it does wrong, and performs all the functions of repentance of sin except forsaking it. It has every thing of devotion except the stability, and gives every thing to religion except the heart. This is a religion of times, events, and circumstances; it is brought into play by accidents, and dwindles away with the occasion which called it out. Festivals and fasts, which occur but seldom, are much observed, and it is to be feared, *because* they occur but seldom; while the great festival which comes every week, comes too often to be so respectfully treated. The piety of these people comes out much in sickness, but is apt to retreat again as recovery approaches. If they die, they are placed by their admirers in the Saints' Calendar; if they recover, they go back into the world they had renounced, and again suspend their amendment, as often as Death suspends his blow.

There is another class whose views are still lower, who yet cannot so far shake off religion, as to be easy without retaining its brief and stated forms, and who contrive to mix up these forms with a faith of a piece with their practice. They blend their inconsistent works with a vague and unwarranted reliance on what the Saviour has done for them, and thus patch up a

merit and a propitiation of their own—running the hazard of incurring the danger of punishment by their lives, and inventing a scheme to avert it by their creed. Religion never interferes with their pleasures, except by the compliment of a short and occasional suspension. Having got through these periodical acts of devotion, they return to the same scenes of vanity and idleness which they had quitted for the temporary duty; forgetting that it was the very end of those acts of devotion to cure the vanity and to correct the idleness. Had the periodical observance answered its true design, it would have disinclined them to the pleasure instead of giving them a dispensation for its indulgence. Had they used the devout exercise in a right spirit, and improved it to its true end, it would have set the heart and life at work on all those pursuits which it was calculated to promote. But their project has more ingenuity. By the stated minutes they give to religion, they cheaply purchase a protection for the mis-employment of the rest of their time. They make these periodical devotions a kind of spiritual insurance office, which is to make up to the adventurers in pleasure, any loss or damage which they may sustain in its voyage.

It is of these shallow devotions, these presumed equivalents for a new heart and a new life, that God declares, by the prophet, that he is *weary*. Though of his own express appointment, they become an *abomination* to him, as soon as the sign comes to be rested in for the thing signified. We Christians have *our new moons and our sacrifices*, under other names and other shapes; of which sacrifices, that is, of the spirit in which they are offered, the Almighty has said, *I cannot away with them, they are iniquity*. MRS. H. MORE.

*There can be no true Religion without vital Union with Christ.*

It is from hence that we see so much cold and inanimate religion in the world, because it has no connexion with the Lord Jesus. He is the source of all light and vital warmth. That religion which is not derived from him, which has not respect to him, which is not supported by faith in him, and communication from him, is not the work of his own Spirit, and partakes not of his divine nature; it has but the influence of a moon-light profession, and is

but a shadow which soon passeth away. True religion in the heart, arises from a vital union with Christ, is a practical receiving out of his fulness; and thus the Christian feels, and discovers all around, the transforming efficacy of his beams: it is the love of Christ manifested to the soul, producing love to Christ, and thus rendering the believer fruitful in every good word and work. Standing at the cross, that wonderful scene of love, the believer receives, by faith, the beams of pardoning mercy, and the soul kindles into holy affections, increasing with the growing discoveries of his boundless grace. Is this our religion? If not—if our profession neither warms our own hearts, nor spreads its influence and its benefits around us—is it any wonder that there should be no power, nor joy, nor consolation in it? The religion of Jesus is of a very different nature: it is not only the brightness of light, but the warmth of love. May this religion be ours! REV. W. GOODE.

*General Thoughts about Religion insufficient.*

I BELIEVE we are often much deceived by general thoughts about religious matters without descending to particulars. General thoughts about things keep them at a distance from us; whilst particular thoughts bring them home to the heart. General thoughts about denying ourselves and living to God, are attended with no difficulty; but when we descend to particulars, and think of denying ourselves in this or that thing, then the difficulty occurs. So also a general knowledge of ourselves as sinners, and of the corruption of our nature, is wholly inefficacious and unhumbling; it is not felt, and leaves no useful impression on the heart. It is the same with respect to Christ and his salvation. We have no value for them until we apply them to the particular exigencies of the soul. When urgent and particular necessity calls with pressing importunity for Christ and his grace, then they are esteemed and applied as they are intended by the Almighty. Christ is too often looked upon more as a physician to resort to in a future time of sickness, than as one to whom we have daily need to apply, and on whose skill and care we depend every moment for the health of soul we enjoy. I have known many who thus rested in generalities all their days. But I never knew one of them who seemed to

make any progress in the divine life. They knew the doctrines of the Gospel well enough, and led very decent lives; and many have felt, at their first awakenings, something of the efficacy of divine truths; but nothing afterwards was to be seen, all seemed to have evaporated and become lost. REV. T. CHARLES.

*Means of Grace do not constitute Grace.*

Is it so, that no outward privilege, dignity, or excellency, is of any account in God's sight, nor doth make holy or pleasing to him? Oh, then, judge not of God's favour by the outward fashion of the person of any man; deem not such a man holy or highly favoured of God, because he is increased in wealth, honour in the world, or the like: do not thou so judge of thyself, think not highly of thyself in regard of birth, honour, wealth, favour, or any outward excellency whatsoever; it is not any of these, or the like, that doth commend thee to God, and make thee pleasing to him. Thou art, indeed, to praise God for any excellency or preferment he hath vouchsafed unto thee; and, having assurance of God's favour in Christ, thou mayest lawfully enjoy it; for God gives to his children, together with the outward blessing, joy in the fruition and use of it, Eccl. v. 18. 19: but yet take heed thou boast not thyself, and lift not up thyself in that respect with God, as if that outward good thing did make thee pleasing to God; no, no; remember it, it is not any outward preferment whatsoever, no, not in religion, that in itself makes thee holy and pleasing to God. It was the conceit of the people of God in ancient time, that they were highly in God's favour, because they had God's temple, and his outward worship amongst them; they cried out, *the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord*, Jer. vii. 4. And is it not the conceit of too many in our days?—do not many bless themselves, and think themselves highly in God's favour, only because they have been baptised, and they enjoy the ministry of the word, and are made partakers of the outward sacrament? Oh, deceive not thyself, whosoever thou art: these things, as they are only outward privileges which thou enjoyest, and haply others want, do not make thee holy and pleasing to God, or nearer to heaven; no, thou mayest have and enjoy these, and perish—yea, they may be to thee seals of deeper condemnation. Ever think on it, that it is not any outward privilege, no, not

in religion, that can of itself make thee pleasing to God; and therefore do not lift up thyself in regard of the fruition of outward privileges of religion; never rest till thou have further assurance of God's favour, than the enjoyment and outward use of them.

REV. E. ELTON.

*Discrimination between a false and true Profession.*

PROFESSING Christ, is not confessing him; for to profess Christ is one thing—to confess Christ is another. Confession is a living testimony for Christ, in a time when religion suffers; profession may be only a lifeless formality, in a time when religion prospers. To confess Christ, is to choose his ways, and own them. To profess Christ, is to plead for his ways, and yet live beside them. Profession may be from a feigned love to the ways of Christ; but confession is from a rooted love to the person of Christ.

To profess Christ, is to own him when none deny him; to confess Christ, is to plead for him, and suffer for him, when others oppose him. Hypocrites may be professors; but the martyrs are the true confessors. Profession is a swimming down the stream. Confession is a swimming against the stream. Now many may swim with the stream, like the dead fish, that cannot swim against the stream with the living fish. Many may profess Christ, that cannot confess Christ; and so, notwithstanding their profession, yet are but almost Christians.

MATT. MEAD.

*Discrimination between a false and true Hope.*

A MAN may have great hopes of Heaven, great hopes of being saved, and yet be but almost a Christian.

Indeed there is a hope of Heaven which is the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, Heb. vi. 19: it never miscarries, and it is known by four properties.

First, it is a hope that purifies the heart, purges out sin; *he that hath this hope, purifies himself even as God is pure*, 1 John iii. 3. That soul that truly hopes to enjoy God, truly endeavours to be like God.

Secondly, it is a hope which fills the heart with gladness: *we rejoice in hope of the glory of God*, Rom. v. 2; Ps. cxxx. 5.

Thirdly, it is a hope that is founded upon the promise: as there can be no true faith

without a promise, so, nor any true hope: faith applies the promise, and hope expects the fulfilling the promise: faith relies upon the truth of it, and hope waits for the good of it: faith gives interest, hope expects delivery and seisin.

Fourthly, it is a hope that is wrought by God himself in the soul; who is therefore called *the God of hope*, Rom. xv. 13, as being the Author as well as the Object of hope. Now he that hath this hope shall never miscarry: this is a right hope; the hope of the true believer: *Christ in you, the hope of glory*.

But then, as there is a true and sound hope, so there is a false and rotten hope; and this is much more common. . . .

There is nothing more common, than to see men big with groundless hopes of Heaven: as,

1. A man may have great hope that hath no grace; you read of the *hope of hypocrites*.

The performance of duties is a proof of their hope; the foolish virgins would never have done what they did, had they thought they should have been shut out after all. Many professors would not be at such pains in duties as they are, if they did not hope for Heaven. Hope is the great motive to action: despair cuts the sinews of all endeavours. . . . So that there may be great hope where there is no grace; experience proves this: formal professors are men of no grace, but yet men of great hopes; nay, many times you shall find that none fear more about their eternal condition, than they that have most cause of hope; and none hope more than they that have most cause of fear. As interest in hope may sometimes be without hope, so hope in God may be without interest.

2. A man may hope in the mercy, and goodness, and power of God, without eyeing the promise; and this is the hope of most: God is full of mercy and goodness, and therefore willing to save; and he is infinite in power, and therefore able to save; why therefore should I not rest on him?

Now it is presumption, and therefore sin, to hope in the mercy of God, otherwise than by eyeing the promise; for the promise is the channel of mercy, the pipe through which it is conveyed: all the blessedness the saints enjoy in Heaven, is no other than what is the fruit of promise relied on, and hoped for here on earth. A man hath no



warrant to hope in God, but by virtue of the promise.

3. A man may hope for Heaven, and yet not cleanse his heart, nor depart from his secret sins; that hope of salvation that is not accompanied with heart-purification, that is a vain hope.

4. A man may hope for Heaven, and yet be doing the work of hell; he may hope for salvation, and yet be working out his own damnation, and so perish in his confidences. This is the case of many, *Male agendo sperant, et sperando preunt*; like the waterman, that looks one way, and rows another; many have their eyes on Heaven, whose hearts are in the earth; they hope in God, but choose him not for a portion; they hope in God, but do not love him as the best good, and therefore are like to have no portion in him, nor good by him; but are like to perish without him, notwithstanding all their hopes: *What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God takes away his soul?*

MATT. MEAD.

*Attendance on the Ordinances no proof  
- of Religious Principle.*

It is not easy to lay open the utter nakedness of the natural heart in reference to God; or to convince the possessor of it, that under the guise of his many plausibilities, there may lurk that which gives to sin all its hideousness. The mere man of ordinances cannot acquiesce in what he reckons to be the exaggerations of orthodoxy upon this subject; nor can he at all conceive how it is possible that, with so much of the semblance of godliness about him, there should, at the same time, be within him the very opposite of godliness. It is, indeed, a difficult task to carry upon this point the conviction of him who positively loves the Sabbath, and to whom the chime of its morning bells brings the delightful associations of peace and of sacredness,—who has his hours of prayer, at which he gathers his family around him, and his hours of attendance on that house where the man of God deals out his weekly lessons to the assembled congregation. It may be in vain to tell him, that God in fact is a weariness to his heart, when it is attested to him by his own consciousness,—that, when the preacher is before him, and the people are around him, and the professed object of their coming together is to join

in the exercise of devotion, and to grow in the knowledge of God, he finds in fact that all is pleasantness,—that his eye is not merely filled with the public exhibition, and his ear regaled by the impressiveness of a human voice, but that the interest of his heart is completely kept up by the succession and variety of the exercises. It may be in vain to tell him, that this religion of taste, or this religion of habit, or this religion of inheritance, may utterly consist with the deep and the determined worldliness of all his affections,—that he whom he thinks to be the God of his Sabbath is not the God of his week; but that, throughout all the successive days of it, he is going astray after the idols of vanity, and living without God in the world. This is demonstration enough of all his forms, and all his observations, being a mere surface display, without a living principle of piety. But perhaps it may serve more effectually to convince him of it, should we ask him, how his godliness thrives in the closet, and what are the workings of his heart, in the abstract and solitary hour of intercourse, with the unseen Father. In church, there may be much to interest him, and to keep him alive. But when alone, and deserted by all the accompaniments of a solemn assembly, we should like to know with what vivacity he enters on the one business of meditating on God, and holding converse with God. Is the sense of the all-seeing and ever-present Deity enough for him; and does love to God brighten and sustain the moments of solitary prayer? The mind may have enough to interest it in church; but does the secret exercise of fellowship with the Father bring no distaste, and no weariness along with it? Is it any thing more than the homage of a formal presentation? And when the business of devotion is thus unpeopled of all its externals, and of all its accessaries; when thus reduced to a naked exercise of spirit, can you appeal to the longings, and the affections of that spirit, as the essential proof of your godliness? And do you never, on occasions like this, discover that which is in your hearts, and detect their enmity to him who formed them? Do you afford no ground for the complaint which he uttered of old, when he said, *Have I been a wilderness unto Israel, and a land of darkness?* And do you not perceive that with this direction of your feelings and your desires

away from the living God, though you be outwardly clean, as by the operation of snow water, he may plunge you in the ditch, and make your own clothes to abhor you?  
DR. CHALMERS.

*False Liberality or Indifference in the cause of Religion an affront to God.*

IT is almost incredible, that those who do believe their religion, should be so indifferent what men believe, so careless to understand what they believe themselves, so unconcerned to maintain and propagate the true Christian faith, and to maintain a just reverence and veneration for it.

What can such men think of our Saviour's appearance in human nature, if they do really believe it? Did the eternal Son of God take human nature, and live and converse in this world as a man, preach the Gospel, work miracles, die upon the cross, rise again from the dead, and visibly ascend up into heaven, to do nothing but what might as well have been left undone; what is not worth any great pains to understand; what we may believe, or not believe, without any danger; what is fit to be ridiculed, or not worth defending if it be? Is not this a greater affront to the wisdom and goodness of God, and to the love and condescension of our Saviour, than to deny that there ever was such a person as Christ in the world? Is not an infidel, who ridicules the Christian faith, much more innocent than a Christian who can patiently hear it ridiculed? Were there no other proof of what great concernment the Christian faith is, we need no other than that God sent his only and eternal Son to preach the Gospel; and certainly so great a Person did not come upon a needless errand. But when we consider what it is the Gospel teaches, no less than how to obtain eternal happiness, and how to avoid eternal miseries; to believe this, and to believe it with lukewarmness and indifferency, atheists and infidels themselves must despise, as the most stupid and contemptible folly: for it is to be indifferent and unconcerned about the most concerning matters in the world, which at best argues a very trifling spirit: and, besides the affront to God and to our Saviour, it makes faith itself useless to all the purposes of religion; for men who are so indifferent about their faith, will have no great zeal in the practice of reli-

gion. I know this is very often excused and justified with the pretence of moderation and Christian charity, of a quiet and peaceable temper, which will not damn men, nor quarrel with their neighbours for every difference in opinion: nay, the popular cry of liberty of conscience itself is pressed to serve this cause. But how great virtues soever these may be thought, it is certain men very much mistake them, when moderation shuts out all zeal for God, and our most holy faith; when charity for men excludes all concernment for their souls; when men are so tame and gentle as not to contend, *and contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*; and when liberty of conscience is turned into a liberty to reject and laugh at all the articles and mysteries of the Christian faith, and to profess and propagate, and that without any moderation, the most damnable heresies. DR. W. SHERLOCK.

*On the term "Righteous overmuch."*

*Be not righteous overmuch; neither make thyself overwise; why shouldst thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked; neither be thou foolish; why shouldst thou die before thy time? It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this; yea, also from this withdraw not thy hand: for he that feareth God, shall come forth of them all.*

Persons who relish not nor study the word of God as a whole, have often particular parts of it which they like; favourite texts, such as, when severed from their connexion, and regarded in their sound rather than their sense, appear to suit their preconceived opinions and prevalent desires. These little insulated scraps of Scripture, misunderstood and perverted, and applied to purposes the very opposite of the Divine intention, obtain a free currency amongst multitudes of people, many of whom perhaps never read them in their Bibles, but have got them at second-hand as maxims of high authority; and they are quoted on all occasions, and referred to with the easy confidence of a geometer quoting his axioms. In this, and in many other ways, the word of God meets with treatment, which would be represented as an insult by any human author; being made to express sentiments in perfect contrariety to its general spirit, and even to its most explicit declarations.

Few texts (perhaps I might say none)

have ever been in such general favour, have ever been caught at, and circulated, and appealed to with approbation, by so great a variety of characters, as the first clause of the sixteenth verse, *Be not righteous overmuch*.—Its grand recommendation lies in its being so *undefined*, susceptible of so many shades of meaning; prescribing no precise boundaries, but leaving matters conveniently at large, and thus affording latitude for every man to fix his own standard, (and even that may be very fluctuating,) and then to appeal to Scripture against all who go beyond him, as exceeding reasonable bounds, and being *righteous overmuch*. For it is surprising how men, who hate and disregard the Bible in its great truths and requirements, will yet quote its words, nay, even plead for its authority, when it can be made, by any perversion, to accord with their own inclinations.

The saying is a favourite one with the profligate, who, in cursing the enthusiasm and hypocrisy of others, vainly fancies that he is vindicating his own vice and folly; and who reckons it quite a sufficient reason for rejecting with scorn a serious and salutary advice, that it comes from one whom all must allow to be—*righteous overmuch*.

Often, on the other hand, is it appealed to by the man of morality, who, with stern severity, condemns the profligate, but who piques himself on his own sobriety, honesty, industry, kindness, and general decency of character; and, making this external virtue his religion, though without a single sentiment or emotion of inward godliness, considers every thing beyond it as being—*righteous overmuch*.

Many, who are equally destitute of the true spirit of religion, who feel its services an irksome drudgery, whose secret language in them all is, 'What a weariness is it!' and who therefore satisfy their consciences with very flimsy apologies for the neglect of them, are ever ready to pronounce those *righteous overmuch*, who cannot see their excuses in the same satisfactory light with themselves.

This admonition too is a weapon in constant use with the thousands, whose religion consists in the strict observance of its outward forms, in their appropriate times and places. They would not for the world be missed out of their pew on a Sunday, and with even greater reluctance

on certain days of human institution. But they are clear for keeping religion to its proper place. This is a topic on which they continually insist; a species of *propriety* which, in company, with a smile of self-complacency, is for ever on their lips. It is all well, if a man minds religion on its own appropriate day, and attends to his business the rest of the week. These things must not be made to clash. *Six days shalt thou labour, and one thou shalt rest*, are God's own prescriptions;—and the Bible itself enjoins us not to be—*righteous overmuch*.

But there are none to whom this favourite caution is of more essential service, than those professors of religion, of whom, alas! the number is not small, who, disliking *the offence of the cross*, are desirous to keep on good terms with both Christ and the world, and who cover from others, and try to cover from themselves, the real principle of their conduct, by prudential maxims of imposing plausibility, and some of them in the terms of Scripture. The wisdom of the serpent, they say, is recommended to us, as well as the harmlessness of the dove. They cannot see the use of exposing themselves and their religion to needless derision. They are ever mightily afraid, lest, by the over-strictness and uncomplying spirit of its professors, men should be led to form gloomy notions of the Gospel, as a system of morose and puritanical austerity. 'We must needs go out of the world,' they allege, 'if we are to take no part in its pleasures.' Under the pretext of recommending religion, such persons meet the world half-way; they join in its follies and vain amusements; they rather court than shun its intercourse; and they sanction their unseemly compliances by an appeal to the admonition before us; regarding the reproach cast upon others, who think a more decided and marked separation from the world their duty, as brought upon themselves by their own imprudence,—by *carrying matters too far*,—by being *righteous overmuch*.

A passage of Scripture that has been so much abused, and of which the abuse is so extensively prejudicial, it is of great importance rightly to understand: and, before noticing any of the different views that have been taken of it, I shall state what to me appears to be its true meaning.

The whole passage seems to be an in-

stance of serious and impressive **IRONY** : of which the subject is, the line of conduct most prudent to be pursued, supposing the end in view to be the securing of favour, honour, and prosperity in the world. Thus :—*There is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness.* If, therefore, you wish to avoid the enmity of the world, with its mischievous and sometimes deadly consequences, and to ensure favour, success, honour, and long life,—*be not righteous overmuch* :—remember that religion is a matter, in which men, in general, are particularly fond of moderation ; and beware of assuming an appearance of sanctity greater than the world is disposed to approve of, or to bear with. *Neither make thyself otherwise : why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* Recollect, that the same feelings of envy and malignant jealousy may be excited, as they very often have been, by high degrees of superior intelligence and wisdom. Be not obtrusive, therefore, with your eminent endowments. Deal prudently. Be cautious of exasperating the jealous pride of others. Besides the risks that arise from envy, such qualities may bring you often into the critical situation of an arbitrator ; in which you must unavoidably expose yourself to the resentment of one or other of the parties, and possibly even of both. And from various other sources, danger may arise to you.—But, at the same time, beware. Similar effects may be produced by opposite causes. Although men do not like overmuch religion, you must be on your guard, on the other hand, against the extreme of wickedness :—*be not overmuch wicked.* You will expose yourself to suspicion and hatred, as a dangerous member of society : men will become your enemies from fear, and will think they confer a benefit on the community, by making riddance of you : nay, in the excess of riotous and unbridled profligacy, you may be betrayed into deeds which may awaken the vengeance of human laws, and bring you to an untimely end. Let prudent consideration, then, set bounds to your licentiousness. —*Neither be thou foolish : why shouldst thou die before thy time?* As there are hazards attending high pretensions to wisdom, so are there risks peculiar to folly. The absolute fool becomes the object of contempt. His life is hardly thought

worth an effort, far less a sacrifice, for its preservation. The fool is easily made the tool and the dupe of a party ; exposing himself to be the prey of virulent enemies, or of selfish pretended friends. Folly leads a man into innumerable scrapes. It may induce him heedlessly to mix with wicked associates, and may thus, as indeed has many a time happened, occasion his suffering from crimes, in the perpetration of which he had no active hand, and which, fool as he is, he would shrink from committing. And in numberless ways he may come, by his folly, to *die before his time.*—If, therefore, I repeat, your object be to shun the world's enmity, with its possible and probable effects, and to secure the world's favour, with its desirable accompaniments and consequences, take care of these extremes :—as *there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness,—be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself otherwise : why shouldst thou destroy thyself?* and though *a wicked man may,* and sometimes does, *prolong his life in his wickedness, yet be not overmuch wicked, neither be thou foolish : why shouldst thou die before thy time?*

All Scripture irony is serious, and intended to impress on the mind important lessons. The passage is, in this respect, similar to that striking one towards the close of the book : *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes :—BUT KNOW THOU, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment.* So here, the admonition closes with an impressive recommendation of the fear of the Lord, as the best and only means of inspiring true peace and tranquil security of mind, as a sovereign antidote against the fear of man, and a powerful incentive to the faithful and firm discharge of duty in every situation :—*It is good that thou shouldst take hold of this ; yea, also from this withdraw not thy hand : for HE THAT FEARETH GOD, SHALL COME FORTH OF THEM ALL.* Eccles. vii. 18.

*It is good,*—supremely good and advantageous, *that thou shouldst lay hold on this,*—that is, on what I am now about to mention ; *yea, also from this withdraw not thy hand,*—that is, let this antidote against the perils of an evil world, and against the fear of man, which so often

brings a snare, be the subject of thy constant and attentive remembrance, the object of thy supreme and unceasing desire, and of thine unabating endeavours after its thorough attainment and its permanent influence;—*for he that feareth God shall come forth of them all.* Instead of adopting any of the maxims, or following any of the schemes, of a carnal policy and worldly wisdom, *be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long: sanctify the Lord God in your heart; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread: and He shall be for a sanctuary.* He shall be thy fortress and strong tower; so that thou shalt not need to be afraid of what man can do unto thee. *Thou shalt dwell on high; and thy place of defence shall be the munition of rocks. He that dwelleth in the*

*secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress; my God, in him will I trust. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler,* Psal. xci. 1, 2, 4. *Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.* Matt. x. 28-31.

DR. WARDLAW.

## SECTION II.—WHAT GENUINE RELIGION IS.

*Christ the only entrance into vital Practical Religion.*

THERE is no entrance into any vital practical religion but by Christ, and by faith in him. That religion that does not place him as the beginning, that is not entirely dependent upon him for all its supplies, that does not place his glory as the end of all, is not of God. Yea, it is contrary to the plain declarations of his word; it arises from an ignorance of Scripture truth, a misapprehension of the evil of sin, and our sinful state; it rests upon a wrong foundation, proceeds upon false principles, and is directed to a wrong end. Plausible it may be in its appearances, and beneficial in its effects upon those around us, but can never be acceptable in the sight of God. The true believer traces back all his religious exercises and duties to the grace of Christ, and of his Spirit, as their source; he expects their acceptance only through the merits of his blood, and the prevalence of his intercession; and acknowledges his glory as the only proper end of all. The more abundant, therefore, the fruits of grace are in his heart and life, the more he feels indebted to him who is the Giver of all, and without whom he daily feels he can do nothing. Repentance and faith, the first steps in the Christian course, those special graces upon the possession and exercise of which all other covenant blessings

are suspended, were the purchase of his blood, and are the gifts of his hand. He is exalted to give repentance, and is the author and finisher of faith. Here begins all practical Christianity: thus it is carried forward by the faith of Jesus, and is therefore called in its several branches, with the utmost propriety, the *living by faith*, the *obedience of faith*. This, then, is the only rule whereby we may judge with safety of our religious exercises, whether they spring from nature or grace; whether they are the genuine effects of the grace of the Spirit, or the mere selfish efforts of an unregenerate heart, destitute of the faith of Jesus, and the love of God. Let us, then, faithfully *examine ourselves, whether we be in the faith*, and whether Jesus, our HOPE OF GLORY, BE IN US. Our most specious services, unconnected with him, will leave us under guilt, and therefore leave us to perish. But the grace that flows from him, shall lead effectually to him, and bring the believing sinner to the complete enjoyment of all the purchased blessings of his cross and ransom. *All things are ours, if we are Christ's; for Christ is God's.*

The sweet influences flowing from Christ, confirm the understanding in the knowledge of truth, establish the faith, and strengthen the hope of the believer, and thus give a holy consistency to his profession, a firmness to his resolution, and a

consistency to his obedience. That practical morality which is not derived from him, while it is deficient in its principle, is always uncertain in its exercises: it wants the energy of faith, the animation of hope, and the ardour of love; these spring alone from union with Jesus, and are supported by the continual communication from his fulness, who is *the wisdom, the righteousness, the sanctification, and redemption of his people*. The prayer of faith derives the blessing, while it supplicates to be *strengthened mightily by his Spirit in the inner man*. Then there is a mighty strength of humiliation, a mighty strength of faith, of hope, of love, of joy, and of consolation; and the joy of the Lord becomes the practical strength of every Christian grace. While Jesus dwells in the heart by faith, *the believer is filled with all the fulness of God*; this is the great secret of the Christian life: then, *though weak, we are strong*: though we can do nothing, yet we can do all things through Christ strengthening us. The knowledge and experience of the love and grace of Jesus fortifies against temptation, subdues the power of inward corruption, and affords not only the most powerful motive, but the most effectual influence in forwarding the sanctification of the heart and conduct. Then alone am I conscious of spiritual strength, when, emptied of self, *I am deriving all out of his fulness* for every purpose of the Christian life, and when I feel that *in Jehovah I HAVE RIGHTEOUSNESS AND STRENGTH*.

REV. W. GOODE.

### *Holiness the leading feature and end of Christianity.*

CHRIST did not take all those pains to lay aside his robes of glory, and come down hither into the world; to enter into a virgin's womb, to be born in our human shape, and be laid a poor crying infant in a manger, and, having no *form or comeliness* at all upon him, to take upon him the *form of a servant*, to undergo a reproachful and ignominious life, and at last to be abandoned to a shameful death, a death upon the cross; I say, he did not do all this merely to bring in a *notion* into the world, without producing any real substantial effect at all, without the changing, mending, and reforming of the world; so that men should still be as wicked as they were before, and as much under the power

of the prince of darkness, only they should not be thought so; they should still remain as full of all the filthy sores of sin and corruption as before, only they should be *accounted* whole. Shall God come down from heaven, and pitch a tabernacle amongst men? Shall he undertake such a huge design, and make so great a noise of doing something, which, when it is all summed up, shall not at last amount to a reality? Surely Christ did not undergo all this to so little purpose; he would not take all this pains for us that he might be able at last to put into our hands nothing but a blank? Is the great design that was so long carried in the womb of eternity now proved abortive, or else nothing but a mere windy birth? No, surely—the end of the Gospel is life and perfection, it is a divine nature, it is a God-like frame and disposition of spirit; it is to make us partakers of the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, without which salvation itself were but a notion.

Christ came into the world to make an expiation and atonement for our sins; but the end of this was, that we might *eschew sin*, that we might forsake *all ungodliness and worldly lusts*. The Gospel declares pardon of sin to those that are *heavy laden* with it, and willing to be disburthened, to this end—that it might quicken and enliven us to new obedience. Whereas, otherwise, the guilt of sin might have detained us in horror and despair, and so have kept us still more strongly under the power of it, in sad and dismal apprehensions of God's wrath provoked against us, and inevitably falling on us. But Christ hath now appeared like a *day-star*, with most cheerful beams: nay, he is the *Sun of Righteousness* himself, which hath risen upon the world with his healing wings, with his exhilarating light, that he might chase away all those black despairing thoughts from us. But Christ did not rise that we should play, and sport, and wantonize with his light; but that we should do the work of the day in it; that we should walk *εὐσχημένως* (as the Apostle speaketh), not in our night-clothes of sinful deformity, but clad all over with the comely garments of light. The Gospel is not pregnant with a fancy, with a mere conceit of righteousness without us, hanging at distance over us; whilst our hearts within are nothing but cages of unclean birds, and like houses continually haunted with devils,

may, the very rendezvous of those fiends of darkness.

Holiness is the best thing that God himself can bestow upon us, either in this world or the world to come. True evangelical holiness, that is, Christ formed in the heart of believers, is the very cream and quintessence of the Gospel. And were our hearts sound within, were there not many thick and dark fumes that did arise from thence, and cloud our understandings, we could not easily conceive the substance of Heaven itself to be any thing else but holiness, freed from those encumbrances that did ever clog it and accloy it here: neither should we wish for any other heaven besides this.

CUDWORTH.

In reviewing the leading features of Christian morality, the *holiness* of its precepts is a circumstance that demands especial consideration, and is a proof that the religion, which inculcates it, came from God. All its precepts aim directly at the heart. It never goes about to form the *exterior* of man. To merely external duties it is a stranger. It forms the lives of men no otherwise than by forming their dispositions. It never addresses itself to their vanity, selfishness, or any other corrupt propensity. On the contrary, it declares open war and irreconcilable enmity against *every* evil disposition in the human heart. It tolerates none. Of the most odious sins, such as disobedience to parents, dishonesty, injustice, and murder, it speaks with abhorrence. It says that they ought not even to be named among Christians. But this is not all. It descends into the heart: it puts forth its hand and plucks out every root of bitterness, which, springing up, would pollute the soul and defile the life. Many principles which the world approves, and on many occasions considers to be harmless—as ambition, the eager pursuit of wealth, fondness for pleasure, pride, envy, revenge, contempt of others, and a disposition to filthy jesting,—the Gospel condemns in every form and degree. It forbids the indulgence of them even in thought; it prohibits the adultery of the eye, and the murder of the heart; and commands the desire to be strangled in its birth. Neither the hands, the tongue, the head, nor the heart, must be guilty of one iniquity. However the world may applaud the heroic ambition of one, the love of

glory in another, the successful pursuits of affluence in a third, the high-minded pride, the glowing patriotism which would compel all the neighbouring nations to bow the neck, the steady pursuit of revenge for injuries received, and a sovereign contempt of the rude and ignoble vulgar,—Christianity condemns them all, and enjoins the disciples of Jesus to crucify them without delay. Not one is to be spared, though dear as a right eye for use or pleasure, or even necessary as a right hand for defence or labour. The Gospel does not press men to consider what their fellow-men may think of them, or how it will affect their temporal interest; but what is right, and what is necessary to their well-being. 'If you comply with its precepts you must *be*, and not merely *seem to be*. It is the heart that is required; and all the different prescribed forms of worship and obedience are but so many varied expressions or modifications of it.'

Now, is any thing like this to be found in the writings of the opposers of revelation? No. Their morality, we have seen, has no standard; and their code of morals is, in fact, subversive of all morality. Their deity seems to take no cognisance of the heart. According to them 'there is no merit or crime in the intention.' Their morality only goes to form the exterior of the man. It allows the utmost scope for wicked desires, provided they be not carried into execution to the injury of society: and according to their code, (as recently promulgated,) the assassination of a person who for some political reason may become obnoxious, is a laudable act; the prohibition of the unlawful intercourse between the sexes is a perversion of the 'plainest dictates of nature;' and decayed old age is not worth the pains and expense bestowed in supporting it!

REV. T. H. HORNE.

### *The vital power of Religion.*

WHILE I lay in darkness and the night of paganism, and when I fluctuated uncertain and dubious with wandering steps in the sea of a tempestuous age, ignorant of my own life, and alienated from light and truth, it appeared to me a harsh and difficult thing, as my manners then were, to obtain what divine grace had promised,—namely, that a man should be *born*

\* Bogue's Essay, 74. Fuller's Gospel its own Witness, 27.

*again*, and that, being animated to a new life, he should strip himself of what he was before, and though the body remained the same, he should, in his mind, become altogether a new creature. How can so great a change be possible, said I,—that a man should suddenly, and at once, put off what nature and habit have confirmed in him? These evils are deeply and closely fixed in us. How shall he learn parsimony, who has been accustomed to expensive and magnificent feasts? And how shall he, who has been accustomed to purple, gold, and costly attire, condescend to the simplicity of a plebeian habit? Can he who was delighted with the honours of ambition, live private and obscure? Further,—the man has been accustomed to crowds of clients, and will think solitude the most dreadful punishment. He must still, thought I, be infested by tenacious allurements. Drunkenness, pride, anger, rapacity, cruelty, ambition, and lust, must still domineer over him.

These reflections engaged my mind very often, for they were peculiarly applicable to my own case. I was myself entangled in many errors of my former life, from which I did not think it possible to be cleared: hence, I favoured my vices, and, through despair of what was better, I stuck close to them, as part of my very frame and constitution. But after the filth of my former sins was washed away in the laver of regeneration, and divine light from above had infused itself into my heart, now purified and cleansed; after, through the effusion of the Holy Spirit from heaven, the new birth had made me a new creature indeed, immediately, and in an amazing manner, dubious things began to be cleared up; things once shut were opened; dark things shone forth; and what before seemed difficult, and even impossible, now appeared easy and practicable. I saw that what was born after the flesh, and had lived enslaved by wickedness, was of the *earth, earthy*; but that the new life, now animated by the Holy Ghost, began to be of God. You know and recollect, as perfectly as I do, my conversion from a deadly criminal state, to a state of lively virtue; you know what these opposite states have done for me—what they have taken away, and what they have conferred; and, therefore, I need not proclaim it. To boast of one's own merit is odious; though that cannot be called an expression of boasting,

but of gratitude, which ascribes nothing to the virtue of man, but professes that all proceeds from the gift of God. Thus, deliverance from sin is the consequence of sound faith. The preceding sinful state was owing to human blindness. Of God it is—of God, I say, even all that we can do: thence we live, thence we have strength, thence we conceive and assume vigour; even though, as yet, placed here below, we have some clear foretaste of our future felicity. Only, let fear be the guardian of innocence; that the Lord, who kindly shone into our minds, with an effusion of heavenly grace, may be detained as our guest by the steady obedience of the soul which delights in him, lest pardon received should beget a careless presumption, and the old enemy break in afresh.

CYPRIAN.

*Religion consists much in the affections.*

*The Author of the human nature has not only given affections to men, but has made them very much the spring of men's actions.* As the affections do not only necessarily belong to the human nature, but are a very great part of it; so (inasmuch as by regeneration, persons are renewed in the whole man, and sanctified throughout) holy affections do not only necessarily belong to true religion, but are a very great part of that. And as true religion is of a practical nature, and God hath so constituted the human nature, that the affections are very much the spring of men's actions, this also shews, that true religion must consist very much in the affections.

Such is man's nature, that he is very inactive, any otherwise than he is influenced by some affection, either love or hatred, desire, hope, fear, or some other. These affections we see to be the springs that set men a-going, in all the affairs of life, and engage them in all their pursuits: these are the things that put men forward, and carry them along in all their worldly business: and especially are men excited and animated by these, in all affairs, wherein they are earnestly engaged, and which they pursue with vigour. We see the world of mankind to be exceeding busy and active; and the affections of men are the springs of the motion: take away all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all anger, zeal, and affectionate desire, and the world would be, in a great measure,



motionless and dead; there would be no such thing as activity amongst mankind, or any earnest pursuit whatsoever. It is affection that engages the covetous man, and him that is greedy of worldly profits, in his pursuits; and it is by the affections, that the ambitious man is put forward in his pursuit of worldly glory; and it is the affections also that actuate the voluptuous man, in his pursuit of pleasure and sensual delights: the world continues, from age to age, in a continual commotion and agitation, in a pursuit of these things; but take away all affection, and the spring of all this motion would be gone, and the motion itself would cease. And as in worldly things, worldly affections are very much the spring of men's motion and action; so in religious matters, the spring of their actions are very much religious affections: he that has doctrinal knowledge and speculation only, without affection, never is engaged in the business of religion.

*Nothing is more manifest in fact, than that the things of religion take hold of men's souls no further than they affect them.* There are multitudes that often hear the word of God, and therein hear of those things that are infinitely great and important, and that most nearly concern them, and all that is heard seems to be wholly ineffectual upon them, and to make no alteration in their disposition or behaviour; and the reason is, they are not affected with what they hear. There are many that often hear of the glorious perfections of God, his almighty power, and boundless wisdom, his infinite majesty, and that holiness of God by which he is of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity, and the heavens are not pure in his sight, and of God's infinite goodness and mercy, and hear of the great works of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, wherein there appear the admirable manifestations of these perfections; they hear particularly of the unspeakable love of God and Christ, and of the great things that Christ has done and suffered, and of the great things of another world, of eternal misery, in bearing the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, and of endless blessedness and glory in the presence of God, and the enjoyment of his dear love; they also hear the peremptory commands of God, and his gracious counsels and warnings, and the sweet invita-

tions of the Gospel; I say, they often hear these things, and yet remain as they were before, with no sensible alteration on them, either in heart or practice, because they are not affected with what they hear; and ever will be so till they are affected. I am bold to assert, that there never was any considerable change wrought in the mind or conversation of any one person, by any thing of a religious nature, that ever he read, heard, or saw, that had not his affections moved. Never was a natural man engaged earnestly to seek his salvation; never were any such brought to cry after wisdom, and lift up their voice for understanding, and to wrestle with God in prayer for mercy; and never was one humbled, and brought to the foot of God, from any thing that ever he heard or imagined of his own unworthiness and deservings of God's displeasure; nor was ever one induced to fly for refuge unto Christ, while his heart remained unaffected. Nor was there ever a saint awakened out of a cold, lifeless frame, or recovered from a declining state in religion, and brought back from a lamentable departure from God, without having his heart affected. And, in a word, there never was any thing considerable brought to pass in the heart or life of any man living, by the things of religion, that had not his heart deeply affected by those things.

*The holy Scriptures do every where place religion very much in the affections;* such as fear, hope, love, hatred, desire, joy, sorrow, gratitude, compassion and zeal.

1. The Scriptures place much of religion in godly *fear*; insomuch that it is often spoken of as the character of those who are truly religious persons, that they tremble at God's word, that they fear before him, that their flesh trembles for fear of him, and that they are afraid of his judgments, that his excellency makes them afraid and his dread falls upon them, and the like: and a compellation commonly given the saints in Scripture, is, *fearers of God, or they that fear the Lord*. And because the fear of God is a great part of true godliness, hence true godliness, in general, is very commonly called by the name of *the fear of God*; as every one knows, that knows any thing of the Bible.

2. So *hope* in God and in the promises of his word, is often spoken of in the Scriptures, as a very considerable part of true religion. It is mentioned as one of

the three great things of which religion consists, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. Hope in the Lord is also frequently mentioned as the character of the saints. *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God*, Ps. cxlvi. 5. *Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is*, Jer. xvii. 7. *Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord*. Ps. xxxi. 24. And the like in many other places. Religious fear and hope are, once and again, joined together, as jointly constituting the character of the true saints, Ps. xxxiii. 18. *Behold, the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy*. Ps. cxlvii. 11. *The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy*. Hope is so great a part of true religion, that the Apostle says, *we are saved by hope*, Rom. viii. 24. And this is spoken of as the helmet of the Christian soldier; *And for an helmet, the hope of salvation*, 1 Thess. v. 8; and the sure and stedfast anchor of the soul, which preserves it from being cast away by the storms of this evil world; *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil*, Heb. vi. 19. It is spoken of as a great fruit and benefit which true saints receive by Christ's resurrection; *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead*, 1 Pet. i. 3.

3. The Scriptures place religion very much in the affection of love, in love to God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and love to the people of God, and to mankind. The texts, in which this is manifest, both in the Old Testament and the New, are innumerable. But of this more afterwards.

4. The contrary affection of hatred also, as having sin for its object, is spoken of in Scripture as no inconsiderable part of true religion. It is spoken of as that by which true religion may be known and distinguished; *The fear of the Lord is to hate evil*, Prov. viii. 13. And accordingly, the saints are called upon to give evidence of their sincerity by this; *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil*, Ps. xcvi. 10. And the Psalmist often mentions it as an evidence of his sincerity; *I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the*

*work of them that turn aside*, Ps. ci. 2, 3. *I hate every false way*, Ps. cxix. 104. So ver. 128. Again, Ps. cxxxix. 21, *Do I not hate them, O Lord, that hate thee?*

5. So holy desire, exercised in longings, hungerings, and thirstings after God and holiness, is often mentioned in Scripture as an important part of true religion. *The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee*, Isa. xxvi. 8. *One thing have I desired of the Lord, and that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple*, Ps. xxvii. 4. *As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?* Ps. xlii. 1, 2. *My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is; to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary*, Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God*, Ps. lxxxiv. 1, 2. *My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times*, Ps. cxix. 20. So Ps. lxxxiii. 25. cxliii. 6, 7. cxxx. 6. Cant. iii. 1, 2. vi. 8. Such a holy desire and thirst of soul is mentioned, as one of those great things which renders or denotes a man truly blessed, in the beginning of Christ's sermon on the mount, *Blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled*, Matt. v. 5. And this holy thirst is spoken of, as a great thing in the condition of a participation of the blessings of eternal life. *I will give to him that is athirst, of the fountain of the water of life freely*, Rev. xxi. 6.

6. The Scriptures speak of holy joy, as a great part of true religion; so it is represented in 1 Pet. i. 8. And as an important part of religion, it is often exhorted to, and pressed with great earnestness. *Delight thyself in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart*, Ps. xxvii. 4. *Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous*, Ps. xcvi. 12. So Ps. xxxiii. 1, *Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous*. Matt. v. 12, *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad*. Phil. iii. 1, *Finally, brethren, rejoice in the Lord*. And chap. iv. 4, *Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice*.

1 Thess. v. 16, *Rejoice evermore. Ps. cxlix. 2, Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.* This is mentioned among the principal fruits of the Spirit of grace, Gal. v. 22, *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, &c.* The Psalmist mentions his holy joy as an evidence of his sincerity, cxix. 14, *I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.*

7. Religious sorrow, mourning, and brokenness of heart, are also frequently spoken of as a great part of true religion. These things are often mentioned as distinguishing qualities of the true saints, and a great part of their character; *Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted*, Matt. v. 4. *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit*, Ps. xxxiv. 18. *The Lord hath anointed me—to bind up the broken-hearted,—to comfort all that mourn*, Isa. lxi. 1, 2. This godly sorrow and brokenness of heart is often spoken of, not only as a great thing in the distinguishing character of the saints, but that in them, which is peculiarly acceptable and pleasing to God; *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise*, Ps. li. 17. *Thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the hearts of the contrite ones*, Isa. lvii. 15. *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit*, Isa. lxvi. 2.

8. Another affection often mentioned, as that in the exercise of which much of true religion appears, is *gratitude*; especially as exercised in thankfulness and praise to God. This being so much spoken of in the Book of Psalms, and other parts of the holy Scriptures, I need not mention particular texts.

9. Again, the holy Scriptures do frequently speak of *compassion* or *mercy*, as a very great and essential thing in true religion: insomuch that good men are in Scripture denominated from hence; and a merciful man, and a good man, are equivalent terms in Scripture; *The righteous man perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away*, Isa. lvii. 1. And the Scripture chooses out this quality, as that by which, in a pe-

culiar manner, a righteous man is deciphered. Ps. xxxvii. 21, *The righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth; and verse 26, He is ever merciful and lendeth.* And Prov. xiv. 31, *He that honoureth the Lord, hath mercy on the poor.* And Col. iii. 12, *Put ye on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, &c.* This is one of those great things, by which those who are truly blessed are described by our Saviour, Matt. v. 7. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.* And this Christ also speaks of, as one of the weightier matters of the law, Matt. xxiii. 23. *Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith.* To the same purpose is that, Mic. vi. 8. *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justice, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God.* And also that, Hos. vi. 6. *For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.* Which seems to have been a text much delighted in by our Saviour, by his manner of citing it once and again, Matt. ix. 13. and xii. 7.

10. Zeal is also spoken of, as a very essential part of the religion of true saints. It is spoken of as a great thing Christ had in view, in giving himself for our redemption, Tit. iii. 14. *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.* And this is spoken of, as the great thing wanting in the lukewarm Laodiceans, Rev. iii. 15, 16, 19.

I have mentioned but a few texts, out of an innumerable multitude, all over the Scripture, which place religion very much in the affections. But what has been observed, may be sufficient to shew that they who would deny that much of true religion lies in the affections, and maintain the contrary, must throw away what we have been wont to own for our Bible, and get some other rule, by which to judge of the nature of religion.

PRES. EDWARDS.

And, now, if the use of the affections in religion, in general, be at length shewn to be conformable to reason, it will not require many words to prove that our blessed Saviour is the proper object of them. We know that love, gratitude, joy, hope, trust, have all their appropriate objects. Now,

it must be at once conceded, that if these appropriate objects be not exhibited, it is perfectly unreasonable to expect that the correspondent passions should be excited. If we ask for love, in the case of an object which has no excellence, or desirableness; for gratitude, where no obligation has been conferred; for joy, where there is no just cause of self-congratulation; for hope, where nothing is expected; for trust, where there exists no ground of reliance; then, indeed, we must kiss the rod, and patiently submit to correction. This would be indeed Egyptian bondage, to demand the effects without the means of producing them. Is the case then so? Are we ready to adopt the language of the avowed enemies of our adorable Saviour; and again to say of him *in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, that he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him?* Isaiah, liii. 2. Is it no obligation that he who *thought it not robbery to be equal with God*, should yet for our sakes *make himself of no reputation, and take upon him the form of a servant, and be made in the likeness of men; and humble himself, and become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross?* Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8. Is it no cause of joy, *that to us is born a Saviour*, (Luke ii. 10, 11) by whom we may be *delivered from the power of darkness, and be made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light?* Col. i. 12, 13. Can there be a *hope comparable to that of our calling*, (Ephes. i. 18) *which is Christ in us, the hope of glory?* Col. i. 27. Can there be a trust to be preferred to the reliance on *Christ Jesus, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever?* Heb. xiii. 8. Surely, if our opponent be not dead to every generous emotion, he cannot look his own objection in the face, without a blush of shame and indignation.

WILBERFORCE.

#### *Religion of a progressive nature.*

RELIGION is a generous and noble thing in regard of its progress; it is perpetually carrying on that mind, in which it is once seated, toward perfection. Though the first appearance of it upon the souls of good men, may be but as the wings of the morning spreading themselves upon the mountains, yet it is still rising higher and higher upon them, chasing away all the filthy mists and vapours of sin and wick-

edness before it, till it arrives at its meridian altitude.\* There is the strength and force of the Divinity in it; and though, when it first enters into the minds of men, it may seem to be *sown in weakness*, yet it will raise itself in power. As Christ was in his bodily appearance, he was still increasing in wisdom, and knowledge, and favour with God and man, until he was perfected in glory: so is he also in his spiritual appearance in the souls of men; and accordingly the New Testament does more than once distinguish of Christ in his several ages, and degrees of growth in the souls of all true Christians. Good men are always *walking on from strength to strength, till at last they see God in Zion*. Religion, though it hath its infancy, yet it hath no old age: while it is in its minority, it is always *in motu*; but when it comes to its maturity and full age, it will always be *in quiete*, it is then *always the same, and its years fail not, but it shall endure for ever*. Holy and religious souls being once touched with an inward sense of divine beauty and goodness, by a strong impress upon them are moved swiftly after God, and, as the Apostle expresses himself, *forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, they press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*; that so they may *attain to the resurrection of the dead*, Phil. iii. 11, 13, 14.

Where a spirit of religion is, there is the central force of heaven itself, quickening and enlivening those that are informed by it in their motions toward heaven. As on the other side all unhallowed and defiled minds are within the attractive power of hell, and are continually hastening their course thither, being strongly pressed down by the weight of their wickedness. 'Αἰὶ τινὰς ἔχει κινήσει ἡ φύσις, as Plutarch hath well observed, 'Every nature in this world hath some proper centre which it is always hastening to.' Sin and wickedness does not hover a little over the bottomless pit of hell, and only flutter about it; but it is continually sinking lower and lower into it. Neither does true grace make some feeble assays toward heaven, but by a mighty energy within itself, it is always soaring up higher and higher into heaven.

\* *The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*, Prov. iv. 18.

A good Christian does not only court his happiness, and cast now and then a smile upon it, or satisfy himself merely to be contracted to it; but with the greatest ardours of love and desire he pursues the solemnity of the just nuptials, that he may be wedded to it and made one with it. It is not an airy speculation of heaven as a thing (though never so undoubtedly) to come, that can satisfy his hungry desires, but the real possession of it even in this life.\* Such a happiness would be less in the esteem of good men, that were only good to be enjoyed at the end of this life when all other enjoyments fail him.

REV. J. SMITH.

These expressions (1 Pet. v. 10.) have in them that which is primarily to be sought after by every Christian, *perseverance* and *progress* in grace. These two are here interwoven! for there be two words importing the one, and two the other, and they are interchangeably placed. This is often urged on Christians as their duty, and accordingly ought they to apply themselves to it, and use their highest diligence in it; not to take the beginning of Christianity for the end of it, to think it enough if they are entered into the way of it, and to sit down upon the entry; but to walk on, to *go from strength to strength*, and, even through the greatest difficulties and discouragements, to pass forward with unmoved stability and fixedness of mind. They ought to be aiming at perfection. It is true, we shall still fall exceedingly short of it; but the more we study it, the nearer shall we come to it; the higher we aim, the higher shall we shoot, though we shoot not so high as we aim.

It is an excellent life, and it is the proper life of a Christian, to be daily outstripping himself, to be spiritually wiser, holier, more heavenly-minded to-day than yesterday, and to-morrow (if it be added to his life) than to-day; *Suavissima vita est indices sentire se fieri meliorem*; every day loving the world less, and Christ more, than on the former, and gaining every day some further victory over his secret corruptions; having his passions more subdued and mortified, his desires in all temporal things more cool and indifferent, and in spiritual things, more ardent; that

miserable lightness of spirit cured, and his heart rendered more solid and fixed upon God, aspiring to more near communion with Him, and labouring that particular graces may be made more lively and strong, by often exercising and stirring them up; faith more confirmed and stayed, love more inflamed, composed meekness producing more deep humility. Oh, this were a worthy ambition indeed! You would have your estates growing, and your credit growing; how much rather should you seek to have your graces growing, and not be content with any thing you have attained to!

But all our endeavours and diligence in this, will be vain, unless we look for our perfecting and establishing from that *right hand*, without which we can do nothing. Thither the Apostle moves his desires for his brethren, and so teaches them the same address for themselves: *The God of all grace make you perfect.* LEIGHTON.

Christianity directs men to aim at the *very highest attainments, whilst she encourages the weakest efforts*. Never did any religion but the Christian lay man so low in abasement and self-humiliation, and yet, at the same time, raise him to such a height of holy pursuit, and cheer him with such encouragements under his weakness and failures. Thus it unites every thing requisite in the moral machinery which is to operate upon man. It applies a mighty lever, so to speak, which lifts him up from the depths into which he has sunk, and places him on the elevated course where he is to run his race. It says to him, *Be ye holy, as God is holy*, Lev. xi. 44.—2 Pet. i. 15, 16: and then adds, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*, Matt. xi. 29, 30. It bids man aim at the standard of supreme love to Almighty God, and of love to his neighbour, for God's sake; and yet assures him that he will not *break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax*, Isa. xlii. 3. It never says to him, 'You have done enough, you have attained a sufficient measure of holiness;' and yet, it never says to him, 'Your faulty efforts are unacceptable, your imperfect beginnings are useless.' In short, it animates the advanced disciple to higher attainments, and condescends to the infant scholar in his incipient efforts: it never lowers its standard on the one hand, nor

\* So we read John vi. 54. *hath eternal life*; and 1 John v. 11-13.

discourages the feeblest essays on the other; but unites the loftiest aim with the most genuine humility in the temper of its aspirants; and thus carries the clearest testimony within itself of a divinely inspired code.

REV. D. WILSON.

*Necessity of a thorough work of Conviction of Sin.*

If a man be not thoroughly convinced of sin, and his heart truly broken, whatever his profession of godliness may be, yet he will be sure to miscarry. Every work of conviction is not a thorough work: there are convictions that are not only natural and rational, but not from the powerful work of the Spirit of God.

Rational conviction is 'that which proceeds from the working of a natural conscience, charging guilt from the light of nature, by the help of those κοινὰ ἐννοιαί, those common principles of reason that are in all men.' This is the conviction you read of, Rom. ii. 14, 15. It is said, that the Gentiles, who had not the law, yet had their consciences bearing witness, and accusing or excusing one another. Though they had not the light of Scripture, yet they had convictions from the light of nature. Now, by the help of the Gospel light, these convictions may be much improved, and yet the heart not renewed.

But then there is a spiritual conviction; and this is that work of the Spirit of God upon the sinner's heart by the word, whereby the guilt and filth of sin is fully discovered, and the woe and misery of a natural state distinctly set home upon the conscience, to the dread and terror of the sinner whilst he abides in that state and condition. And this is the conviction that is a sound and thorough work. . .

Labour then after a thorough work of conviction; every conviction will not do it: the almost Christian hath his convictions as well as the true Christian, or else he had never gone so far; but they are not sound and right convictions, or else he had gone farther: God will have the soul truly sensible of the bitterness of sin, before it shall taste the sweetness of mercy. The plough of conviction must go deep, and make deep furrows in the heart, before God will sow the precious seed of grace and comfort there, that so it may have depth of earth to grow in. This is the constant method of God; first to shew

man his sin, then his Saviour; first his danger, then his Redeemer; first his wound, then his cure; first his own vileness, then Christ's righteousness. We must be brought to cry out, *Unclean, unclean! to mourn for him whom we have pierced*, and then he sets open, for us, a fountain to wash in for sin, and for uncleanness. That is a notable place; *He looketh upon men, and if any say, I have sinned and perverted that which was right, and it profited me not; he will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light*, Job xxxiii. 27. 28.; the sinner must see the unprofitableness of his unrighteousness, before he profit by Christ's righteousness. The Israelites are first stung with the fiery serpents, and then the brazen serpent is set up. Ephraim is first thoroughly convinced, and then God's bowels of mercy work toward him. Thus it was with Paul, Manasseh, the jailer, &c. So that this is the unchangeable method of God in working grace, to begin with conviction of sin.

Oh therefore labour for thorough conviction; and there are three things we should especially be convinced of.

First, 'Be convinced of the evil of sin;' the filthy and heinous nature of it: this is the greatest evil in the world; it wrongs God, it wounds Christ, it grieves the Holy Spirit, it ruineth a precious soul; all other evils are not to be named with this. My brethren, though to do sin is the worst work, yet to see sin is the best sight; for sin discovered in its vileness, makes Christ to be desired in his fulness.

But above all, labour to be convinced of the mischief of an unsound heart; what an abhorring it is to God, what certain ruin it brings upon the soul. Oh think often upon the hypocrite's hell; Matt. xiv. 15.

Secondly, 'Be convinced of the misery and desperate danger of a natural condition;' for till we see the plague of our hearts, and the misery of our state by nature, we shall never be brought of ourselves to seek help in another.

Thirdly, 'Be convinced of the utter insufficiency and inability of any thing below Christ Jesus to minister relief to thy soul in this case:' all things beside Jesus Christ are 'physicians of no value;' duties, performances, prayers, tears, self-righteousness, avail nothing in this case; they make us, like the troops of Tema, to return

'ashamed at our disappointment' from such 'failing brooks.'

Alas! it is an infinite righteousness that must satisfy for us, for it is an infinite God that is offended by us. If ever thy sin be pardoned, it is infinite mercy that must pardon it; if ever thou be reconciled to God, it is infinite merit must do it; if ever thy heart be changed, and thy state renewed, it is infinite power must effect it; and if ever thy soul escape hell, and be saved at last, it is infinite grace must save it.

In these three things right and sound conviction lieth; and wherever the Spirit of God worketh these thorough convictions, it is in order to a true and sound conversion; for by this means the soul is brought under a right qualification for the receiving of Christ.

MATT. MEAD.

### *Duty of an open Confession of our Faith.*

If there were no other argument, yet, seeing the object of faith is supposed infallibly true, and acknowledged to be so by every one that believeth, seeing it is the nature of truth not to hide itself, but rather to desire the light, that it may appear; this were sufficient to move us to a confession of our faith. But, besides the nature of the thing, we shall find many arguments obliging, pressing, urging us to such a profession. For, first, from the same God, and by the same means by which we have received the object of our faith, by which we came under a possibility of faith, we have also received an express command to make a confession of the same. *Be ready*, saith St. Peter, *always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you*, 1 Pet. iii. 15; and there can be no reason of hope but what is grounded on faith, nor can there be an answer given unto that, without an acknowledgment of this. Secondly, it is true, indeed, that the great promises of the Gospel are made unto faith, and glorious things are spoken of it, but the same promises are made to the confession of faith, together with it; and we know who it is hath said, *Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven*, Matt. x. 32. Besides, the profession of the faith of one Christian confirmeth and edifieth another in his, and the mutual benefit of all layeth an obligation upon every particular. Again; the matters of faith contain so much pu-

rity of doctrine, persuade to such holiness of life, describe God so infinitely glorious, so transcendently gracious, so loving in himself, so merciful in his Son, so wonderful in all his works, that the sole confession of it glorifieth God; and how can we expect to enter into that glory which is none of ours, if we deny God that glory which is his? Lastly, the concealing of those truths which he hath revealed, the not acknowledging of that faith which we are thought to believe, is so far from giving God that glory which is due unto him, that it dishonoureth the faith which it refuseth or neglecteth to profess, and casteth a kind of contumely upon the author of it, as if God had revealed that which man should be ashamed to acknowledge. Wherefore, he that came to save us hath also said unto us, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words, of him shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels*, Luke ix. 26. Such a necessity there is of confession of faith, in respect of God, who commanded it, and is glorified in it; in respect of ourselves, who shall be rewarded for it; and in respect of our brethren, who are edified and confirmed by it.

BP. PEARSON.

It was a notable speech of Azariah the prophet, to Asa, *The Lord is with you, while ye be with him*, 2 Chron. xv. 2. If thou stand with the complete armour of God, pleading the cause of God, fighting against the enemy of God, then mayest thou say in a good conscience, God is with thee, and thou art with him: but, alas! we see in this generation many wearing Christ's livery, and bearing Satan's armour, professing friendship to Christ, yet fighting against him: these two factions are entered already into the battle, pell-mell, so that in the smallest fellowships some ye shall find advancing the kingdom of the one, though very few to fight for the glory of the other. What a shame is this for us, who say we are on the Lord's side, that a wicked man serving Satan shall, in our audience, open his mouth to blaspheme God, and we will not open our mouths to rebuke him? We see carnal men so shameless, that they stand upon no circumstances to dishonour God, and we who profess we love him, for fear we fail against courtesy, and I cannot tell what circumstances, dare not open our mouths to praise him.

Our coldness in this point hath need to be admonished, that we may be stirred up, not by profession only, but by conversation also, to make it known to the world that we belong wholly to the Lord Jesus.

BP. COWPER.

*Necessity of searching the Heart and keeping it with all diligence.*

It is the hardest of works to keep the heart. To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit, will cost no great pains, but to set thyself before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon him—this will cost thee something. To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy; but to get thy heart broken for sin whilst thou art confessing it—melted with free grace whilst thou art blessing God for it—to be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God's infinite holiness, and to keep thy heart in this frame, not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and travailing pains of soul: to repress the outward acts of sin, and compose the external part of thy life in a laudable and comely manner, is no great matter; even carnal persons, by the force of common principles, can do this; but to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up an holy government over thy thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is not easy. . . .

It is a constant work. The keeping of the heart is such a work as is never done till life be done; this labour and our life end together. It is with a Christian in this business, as it is with seamen that have sprung a leak at sea—if they tug not constantly at the pump, the water increases upon them, and will quickly sink them. It is in vain for them to say the work is hard, and we are weary; there is no time or condition in the life of a Christian, which will suffer an intermission of this work. It is in the keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in the keeping up of Moses's hands, whilst Israel and Amalek were fighting below, Exod. xvii. 12. No sooner do Moses's hands grow heavy and sink down, but Amalek prevails. You know it cost David and Peter many a sad day and night for intermitting the watch over their own hearts but a few minutes.

It is the most important business of a Christian's life. Without this we are but formalists in religion; all our professions, gifts, and duties signify nothing—*My son give me thine heart*, Prov. xxiii. 36. God is pleased to call that a gift, which is indeed a debt; he will put this honour upon the creature, to receive it from him in the way of a gift; but if this be not given him, he regards not whatever else you bring to him. There is so much only of worth and value in what we do, as there is of heart in it. . . .

The improvement of our graces depends upon the keeping our hearts. I never knew grace thrive in a negligent and careless soul: the habits and roots of grace are planted in the heart; and the deeper they are radicated there, the more thriving and flourishing grace is. In Eph. iii. 17, we read of *being rooted in grace*: grace in the heart is the root of every gracious word in the mouth, and of every holy work in the hand, Psal. cxvi. 10; 2 Cor. iv. 13. It is true, Christ is the root of a Christian; but Christ is the originating root; and grace a root, originated, planted, and influenced by Christ: according as this thrives under divine influences, so the acts of grace are more or less fruitful, or vigorous. Now in a heart not kept with care and diligence, these fructifying influences are stopped and cut off, multitudes of vanities break in upon it, and devour its strength: the heart is, as it were, the pasture in which multitudes of thoughts are fed every day; a gracious heart diligently kept, feeds many precious thoughts of God in a day—*How precious are thy thoughts to me, O God! how great is the sum of them? If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand; and when I awake, I am still with thee*, Psal. cxxxix. 17. And as the gracious heart feeds and nourishes them, so they refresh and feast the heart. *My soul is filled as with marrow and fatness, whilst I think upon thee, &c.* Psal. lxxiii. 5, 6. But in the disregarded heart, swarms of vain and foolish thoughts are perpetually working, and jumble out those spiritual ideas, and thoughts of God, by which the soul should be refreshed.

Besides, the careless heart makes nothing out of any duty or ordinance it performs or attends on; and yet these are the conduits of heaven, from whence grace is watered and made fruitful. A man may



go with a heedless spirit from ordinance to ordinance, abide all his days under the choicest teaching, and yet never be improved by them; for the neglect of the heart is a leak in the bottom; no heavenly influences, how rich soever, abide in that soul. The heart that lies open and common, is like the highway, free for all passengers; *when the seed fell on it, the fowls came and devoured it*, Matt. xiii. 3, 4. Alas! it is not enough to hear, unless we take heed how we hear; a man may pray, and never be the better, unless he watch unto prayer. In a word, all ordinances, means, and duties, are blessed unto the improvement of grace, according to the care and strictness we use in keeping our hearts in them.

Lastly, The stability of our souls in the hour of temptation, will be much according to the care and conscience we have of keeping our hearts: the careless heart is an easy prey to Satan in the hour of temptation, his main batteries are raised against the heart: if he wins that, he wins all; for it commands the whole man: and, alas! how *easy* a conquest is a neglected heart? It is no more difficult to surprise it, than for an enemy to enter that city whose gates are opened and unguarded: it is the watchful heart that discovers and suppresses the temptation before it comes to its strength. Divines observe this to be the method in which temptations are ripened and brought to their full strength.

FLAVEL.

#### *Necessity of living in a constant view of God.*

How great is our offence and loss, that we live not in much more constant views of God. Herein we sin and suffer both at once; things both very unsuitable to Heaven. Mindfulness of God is the living spring of all holy and pleasant affections and deportments towards him; sets all the wheels a-going; makes the soul as the chariots of Aminadab. These wheels have their eyes also, are guided by a mind, by an intellectual principle. Knowing, intelligent beings (as we also are by participation and according to our measure) so act mutually towards one another. We cannot move towards God but with an open eye, seeing him and our way towards him. If we close our eyes we stand still, or blindly run another course, we know not

whither. All sin is darkness, whether it be neglect of good, or doing of evil: its way is a way of darkness; as a course of holy motion is walking in the light. Our shutting our eyes towards God creates that darkness; surrounds us with a darkness comprehensive of all sin. Now is every thing of enjoined duty waved, and any evil done, that sinful nature prompts us to. Well might it be said, *He that sinneth hath not seen God*, 1 John iii. 6. When we have made ourselves this darkness, we fall of course under Satan's empire, and are presently within his dominions. He is the prince of darkness, and can rule us now at his will. Perishing lost souls are such as in whom the God of this world hath blinded their minds. To open their eyes, and *turn them from darkness to light*, is, to turn them also *from the power of Satan unto God*. What a hell of wickedness are we brought into, in the twinkling of an eye! We are *without God in the world*; as, if a man wink, though at noon-day, he hath as it were put out the sun, it is with him as if there were no such thing. When we have banished God out of our sight, and forgotten him, it is with us as if there were no God. If such a state grow habitual to us, (as we know every sinful aversion of our eye from God tends thereto,) what wickedness is there that will not lurk in this darkness? How often in Scripture is *forgetting God* used as a character, yea, as a paraphrase, a full, though summary expression of sin in general; as if the wickedness, the malignity, the very hell itself of sin, were wholly included (and not connoted only) here. *Now consider this*, (after so dreadful an enumeration, so black a catalogue) *all that forget God*, Ps. l. 22. And again, *The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the people that forget God*, Ps. ix. 17. That heap, that mass of wickedness, of pride, of persecution, cursing, blasphemy, deceit, and mischief, all meet in one that hath not God in all his thoughts. REV. J. HOWE.

#### *Necessity of counting the cost of embracing Christianity.*

ALL that will follow Christ, must take up their cross. This is a very harsh and displeasing article of the Gospel to a carnal mind, but the Scriptures conceal it not. Men are not led blindfold into sufferings, and drawn into a hidden snare by

the Gospel's invitations ; they are told it very often, that they may not pretend a surprisal, nor have any just plea for starting back again. So our Saviour tells his disciples, why he was so express and plain with them in this, *These things have I told you that ye be not offended*, John xvi. 1 ; as if he had said, I have shewed you the ruggedness of your way, that you may not stumble at it, taking it to be a smooth plain one. But then, where this is spoken of, it is usually allayed with the mention of those comforts that accompany these sufferings, or of that glory which follows them. The doctrine of the Apostles, which was so verified in their own persons, was this, that *we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts xiv. 22. An unpleasant way indeed, if you look no further ; but a *kingdom* at the end of it, and that *the kingdom of God*, will transfuse pleasure into the most painful step in it all. It seems a sad condition that falls to the share of godly men in this world, to be eminent in sorrows and troubles. *Many are the afflictions of the righteous*, Ps. xxxiv. 19 ; but that which follows, weighs them abundantly down in consolation, that the Lord himself is engaged in their afflictions, both for their deliverance out of them in due time, and, in the mean time, for their support and preservation under them : *the Lord delivers them out of them all*, and, till he does that, *he keepeth all their bones*. This was literally verified in the natural body of Christ, as St. John observes, xix. 36 ; and it holds spiritually true in his mystical body. The Lord supports the spirits of believers in their troubles, with such solid consolations as are the pillars and strength of their souls, as the bones are of the body, which the Hebrew word for them imports. So, *He keepeth all his bones* ; and the desperate condition of wicked men is opposed to this, verse 21, to illustrate it, *Evil shall slay the wicked*.

Thus, John xvi. 33, they are forewarned in the close, what to expect at the world's hands, as they were divers times before in that same sermon ; but it is a sweet testament, take it altogether : *Ye shall have tribulation in the world, but peace in me*. And seeing he hath jointly bequeathed these two to his followers, were it not great folly to renounce such a bargain, and to let go that peace for fear of this trouble ? The trouble is but *in the world*, but the

*peace is in him*, who weighs down thousands of worlds.

So then, they do exceedingly mistake and misreckon, who would reconcile Christ and the world, who would have the church of Christ, or, at least, themselves for their own shares, enjoy both kinds of peace together ; would willingly have peace in Christ, but are very loth to part with the world's peace. They would be Christians, but they are very ill satisfied when they hear of any thing but ease and prosperity in that estate, and willingly forget the tenor of the Gospel in this ; and so, when times of trouble and sufferings come, their minds are as new and uncouth to it, as if they had not been told of it beforehand. They like better St. Peter's carnal advice to Christ, to avoid suffering, Matt. xvi. 22, than his Apostolic doctrine to Christians, teaching them, that as Christ *suffered*, so they likewise *are called to suffering*. Men are ready to think as Peter did, that Christ should favour himself more in his own body, his church, than to expose it to so much suffering ; and most would be of Rome's mind in this, at least in affection, that the badge of the church should be pomp and prosperity, and not the cross : the true cross and afflictions are too heavy and painful.

But *God's thoughts are not as ours* : those whom he calls to a kingdom, he calls to sufferings as the way to it. He will have the heirs of heaven know, that they are not at home on earth, and that *this is not their rest*. He will not have them, with the abused world, fancy a happiness here, and, as St. Augustine says, ' seek a happy life in the region of death.' The reproaches and wrongs that encounter them shall elevate their minds often to that land of peace and rest, *where righteousness dwells*, 2 Pet. iii. 13. The hard taskmasters shall make them weary of Egypt, which otherwise, possibly, they would comply too well with ; shall dispose them for deliverance, and make it welcome, which, it may be, they might but coldly desire, if they were better used.

He knows what he does, who secretly serves his own good purposes by men's evil ones, and, by the *ploughers that make long furrows* on the back of his church, Ps. cxxix. 3, makes it a fruitful field to himself. Therefore, it is great folly and unadvisedness, to take up a prejudice against his way, to think it might be better

as we would model it, and to complain of the order of things, whereas we should complain of disordered minds : but we had rather have all altered and changed for us, the very course of Providence, than seek the change of our own perverse hearts. But the right temper of a Christian is, to run always cross to the corrupt stream of the world and human iniquity, and to be willingly carried along with the stream of Divine Providence, and not at all to stir a hand, no, nor a thought, to row against that mighty current ; and not only is he carried with it upon necessity, because there is no steering against it, but cheerfully and voluntarily ; not because he must, but because he would. LEIGHTON.

We must not think to be carried up to heaven with the breath of popular applause, nor to swim through a deluge of carnal pleasures into the haven of everlasting happiness. No ; we must look to be tossed to and fro in this world, as in a raging and tempestuous ocean, and never look for perpetual calmness and tranquillity until we are got above the clouds, yea, even above the sun and stars themselves. This world was always a world of trouble, and ever will be. Its very friends, and they that have their portion here, can find no quiet nor satisfaction in it : but the disciples of Christ *they are not of this world*, as Christ himself tells us ; and therefore no wonder if the world frowns more upon them than on others. The way they walk in is opposite to the world : it is enmity itself to the flesh ; and therefore no wonder if they meet with so much enmity and opposition here. The way wherein they go after Christ is a cross-way ; it is cross to sin, cross to Satan, cross to the world, cross to our very selves as we are by nature, and, by consequence, cross to all men in the world but Christ's disciples ; and therefore it is no wonder they meet with so many crosses in it. But howsoever, if we desire to go after Christ, he hath told us beforehand what we must expect. As he hath borne the cross before us, he expects that we now bear it after him ; yea we must not only bear it, but take it up too—not that we should run ourselves into danger, but that we should balk no duty to avoid it, so as to be willing and ready to undergo the greatest suffering rather than to commit the least sin, and to run the greatest

danger rather than neglect the smallest duty. If whilst we are walking in the narrow path of holiness there happens to lie a cross in the way, we must not go on one side nor on the other side of it out of the path we walk in, neither must we kick and spurn at it, but we must patiently take it up and carry it along with us. If it be a little heavy at first, it will soon grow lighter, and not at all hinder, but rather further our progress towards heaven. BR. BEVERIDGE.

*Necessity of diligence and zeal in our Christian calling.*

THE work of a Christian here is very great and various. The soul must be renewed ; corruptions must be mortified ; custom, temptations, and worldly interests must be conquered ; flesh must be subdued ; life, friends, and credit must be slighted ; conscience on good grounds be quieted ; and assurance of pardon and salvation attained. Though God must give us these without our merit, yet he will not give them without our earnest seeking and labour. Besides, there is much knowledge to be got, many ordinances to be used, and duties to be performed : every age, year, and day ; every place we come to ; every person we deal with ; every change of our condition ; still require the renewing of our labour : wives, children, neighbours, friends, enemies, all of them call for duty from us. Judge then, whether men that have so much business lying upon their hands, should not exert themselves ; and whether it be their wisdom either to delay or loiter.—Time passeth on. Yet a few days, and we shall be here no more. Many diseases are ready to assault us. We that are now preaching, and hearing, and talking and walking, must very shortly be carried, and laid in the dust, and there left to the worms in darkness and corruption ; we are almost there already ; we know not whether we shall have another sermon, or sabbath, or hour. How active should they be who know they have so short a space for so great a work ?—And we have enemies that are always plotting and labouring for our destruction. How diligent is Satan in all kind of temptations ! *Therefore be sober, be vigilant ; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may de-*

*your. Whom resist stedfast in the faith,* 1 Pet. v. 8, 9. How diligent are all the *ministers of Satan! False teachers, scoffers, persecutors, and our inbred corruptions, the most busy and diligent of all!* Will a feeble resistance serve our turn? Should we not be more active for our preservation, than our enemies are for our ruin? . . .

The sovereign wisdom of God has made striving necessary to salvation. Who knows the way to heaven better than the God of heaven? When men tell us we are too strict, whom do they accuse, God or us? If it were a fault, it would lie in him that commands, and not in us who obey. These are the men that ask us, whether we are wiser than all the world besides? and yet they will pretend to be wiser than God. How can they reconcile their language with the laws of God? *The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force,* Mat. xi. 12. *Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able,* Luke xiii. 24. *Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave whither thou goest,* Eccles. ix. 10. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,* Phil. ii. 12. *Give diligence to make your calling and election sure,* 2 Pet. i. 10. *If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?* 1 Pet. iv. 18. Let them bring all the seeming reasons they can, against the holy violence of the saints; this sufficeth me to confute them all, that God is of another mind, and he hath commanded me to do much more than I do; and though I could see no other reason for it, his will is reason enough. Who should make law for us, but he that made us? And who should point out the way to heaven, but he that must bring us thither? And who should fix the terms of salvation, but he that bestows the gift of salvation? So that let the world, the flesh, or the devil, speak against a holy laborious life, this is my answer, God hath commanded it. Nay, there never was, or will be, a man, but will approve such a life, and will one day justify the diligence of the saints. And who would not go that way, which every man shall finally applaud? True, it is now a way every where spoken against. But let me tell you, most that speak

against it, in their judgments approve of it; and those that are now against it, will shortly be of another mind. If they come to heaven, their mind must be changed before they come there. . . . Even the best of Christians, when they come to die, exceedingly lament their negligence. They then wish, 'Oh that I had been a thousand times more holy, more heavenly, more laborious for my soul! The world accuses me for doing too much, but my own conscience accuses me of doing too little. It is far easier bearing the scoffs of the world, than the lashes of conscience. I had rather be reproached by the devil for seeking salvation, than reprov'd of God for neglecting it.' How do their failings thus wound and disquiet them, who have been the wonders of the world for their heavenly conversation?—Is not for want of more diligence, that heaven itself is often lost? When they that have *heard the Word, and anon with joy received it, and have done many things, and heard the ministers of Christ gladly,* (Matt. xiii. 20; Mark vi. 20) shall yet perish; should not this rouse us out of our security? How far hath many a man followed Christ, and yet forsook him, when all worldly interests and hopes were to be renounced?—God hath resolved, that heaven shall not be had on easier terms. Rest must always follow labour. *Without holiness no man shall see the Lord,* Heb. xii. 14.

BAXTER.

#### *Necessity of personal Holiness.*

GRACE is Holiness militant, holiness encumbered with many enemies and difficulties, which it still fights against, and manfully quits itself of; and glory is nothing else but Holiness triumphant, Holiness with a palm of victory in her hand, and a crown upon her head: 'Deus ipse cum omni sua bonitate, quatenus extra me est, non facit me beatum, sed quatenus in me est:—' God himself cannot make me happy, if he be only without me, and unless he give in a participation of himself and his own likeness into my soul.' Happiness is nothing but the releasing and unfettering of our souls from all these narrow, scant, and particular good things; and the espousing of them to the highest and most universal good, which is not this or that particular good, but goodness itself; and this is the same thing that we call Holiness. Which, because we our-

selves are so little acquainted with, (being for the most part ever courting a mere shadow of it,) therefore we have such low, abject, and beggarly conceits thereof: whereas it is in itself the most noble, heroic and generous thing in the world. For I mean by Holiness nothing else but God stamped and printed upon the soul. And we may please ourselves with what conceits we will; but so long as we are void of this, we do but dream of Heaven, and I know not what fond paradise; we do but blow up and down an airy bubble of our own fancies, which riseth out of the froth of our vain hearts; we do but court a painted heaven, and woo happiness in a picture, whilst in the mean time a true and real hell will suck in our souls into it, and soon make us sensible of a solid woe and substantial misery.

Divine wisdom hath so ordered the frame of the whole universe, as that every thing should have a certain proper place, that should be a receptacle for it. Hell is the sink of all sin and wickedness. The strong magic of nature pulls and draws every thing continually to that place which is suitable to it, and to which it doth belong; so all these heavy bodies press downwards towards the centre of our earth, being drawn in by it: in like manner hell, wheresoever it is, will by strong sympathy pull in all sin, and magnetically draw it to itself: as true holiness is always breathing upwards, and fluttering towards Heaven, striving to embosom itself with God; and it will at last undoubtedly be conjoined with him; no dismal shades of darkness can possibly stop it in its course or bear it back.

Ὡς αἰεὶ τὸ ὅμοιον ἀγεί Θεὸς εἰς τὸ ὅμοιον.

Nay, we do but deceive ourselves with names: Hell is nothing but the orb of sin and wickedness, or else that hemisphere of darkness in which all evil moves: and Heaven is the opposite hemisphere of light; or else, if you please, the bright orb of truth, holiness, and goodness: and we do actually in this life instate ourselves in the possession of one or other of them. Take sin and disobedience out of hell, and it will presently clear up into light, tranquillity, serenity, and shine out into a heaven. Every true saint carrieth his heaven about with him in his own heart; and hell, that is without him, can have no power over him. He might safely wade

through hell itself, and, like the *three children*, pass through the midst of that *fiery furnace*, and yet not at all be scorched with the flames of it: he might walk through the *valley of the shadow of death*, and yet *fear no evil*.

Sin is the only thing in the world that is contrary to God. God is light, and that is darkness: God is beauty, and that is ugliness and deformity. All sin is direct rebellion against God; and with what notions soever we sugar it and sweeten it, yet God can never smile upon it; he will never make a truce with it. God declares open war against sin, and bids defiance to it; for it is a professed enemy to God's own life and being. God, which is infinite goodness, cannot but hate sin, which is purely evil. And though sin be in itself but a poor, impotent and crazy thing, nothing but straitness, poverty and non-entity, so that of itself it is the most wretched and miserable thing in the world, and needeth no farther punishment besides itself; yet divine vengeance beats it off still farther and farther from God, and, wheresoever it is, will be sure to scourge it and lash it continually. God and sin can never agree together.

That I may therefore yet come nearer to ourselves: *This is the message that I have now to declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.* Christ and the Gospel are light, and there is no darkness at all in them: if you say that you know Christ and his Gospel, and yet keep not Christ's commandments, but dearly hug your private darling corruptions, *you are liars, and the truth is not in you*; you have no acquaintance with the God of light, nor the Gospel of light. If any of you say that you know Christ, and have an interest in him, and yet (as I fear too many do) still nourish ambition, pride, vain-glory within your breasts, harbour malice, revengefulness and cruel hatred to your neighbours in your hearts, eagerly scramble after this worldly pelf, and make the strength of your parts and endeavours serve that blind mammon, the god of this world; if you wallow and tumble in the filthy puddle of fleshly pleasures, or if you aim only at yourselves in your lives, and make yourself the compass by which you sail, and the star by which you steer your course, look-

ing at nothing higher or more noble than yourselves; deceive not yourselves, *you have neither seen Christ nor known him*: you are deeply incorporated (if I may so speak) with the *spirit of this world*, and have no true sympathy with God and Christ, no fellowship at all with them.

And, I beseech you, let us consider; Be there not many of us, that pretend much to Christ, that are plainly in our lives as proud, ambitious, vainglorious, as any others? Be there not many of us that are as much under the power of unruly passions, as cruel, revengeable, malicious, censorious, as others? that have our minds as deeply engaged in the world, and as much envassalled to riches, gain, profit, those great admired deities of the sons of men, and their souls as much overwhelmed and sunk with the cares of this life? Do not many of us as much give ourselves to the pleasures of the flesh, and though not without regrets of conscience, yet every now and then secretly soak ourselves in them? Be there not many of us that have as deep a share likewise in injustice and oppression, in *vexing the fatherless and the widows*? I wish it may not prove some of our cases at that last day, to use such pleas as these unto Christ in our behalf; *Lord, I have prophesied in thy name*; I have preached many a zealous sermon for thee; I have kept many a long fast; I have been very active for thy cause in church, in state; nay, I never made any question but that my name was written in thy book of life: when yet, alas! we shall receive no other return from Christ but this: *I know you not: depart from me ye workers of iniquity*. I am sure there be too many of us that have long pretended to Christ, which make little or no progress in true Christianity, that is, holiness of life; that ever hang hovering in a twilight of grace, and never seriously put ourselves forward into clear daylight, but esteem that glimmering *crepusculum* which we are in, and like that faint twilight better than broad open day: whereas, *the path of the just* (as the wise man speaks) *is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day*. I am sure there be many of us that are perpetual dwarfs in our spiritual stature, like those *silly women* (that St. Paul speaks of) *laden with sins and fed away with divers lusts*, that are *ever learning, and never able to come to the*

*knowledge of the truth*; that are not now one jot taller in Christianity than we were many years ago, but have still as sickly, crazy, and unsound a temper of soul as we had long before.

Indeed we seem to do something; we are always moving and lifting at the stone of corruption that lies upon our hearts; but yet we never stir it notwithstanding, or at least never roll it off from us. We are sometimes a little troubled with the guilt of our sins, and then we think we must thrust our lusts out of our hearts; but afterwards we sprinkle ourselves over with I know not what holy water, and so are contented to let them still abide quietly within us. We do every day truly confess the same sins, and pray against them; and yet still commit them as much as ever, and lie as deeply under the power of them. We have the same water to pump out in every prayer, and still we let the same leak in again upon us. We make a great deal of noise, and raise a great deal of dust with our feet; but we do not move from off the ground on which we stood; we do not go forward at all: or if we do sometimes make a little progress, we quickly lose again the ground which we had gained; like those upper planets in the heaven, which (as the astronomers tell us) sometimes move forwards, sometimes quite backwards, and sometimes perfectly stand still; have their stations and retrogradations, as well as their direct motion. As if religion were nothing else but a dancing up and down upon the same piece of ground, and making several motions and friskings on it; and not a sober journeying and travelling onwards toward some certain place. We do and undo; we do Penelope's *telam texere*; we weave sometimes a web of holiness, but then we let our lusts come, and undo and unravel all again. Like Sisyphus in the fable, we roll up a mighty stone with much ado, sweating and tugging up the hill; and then we let it go, and tumble down again unto the bottom: and this is our constant work. Like those Danaides which the poets speak of, we are always filling water into a sieve by our prayers, duties, and performances, which still runs out as fast as we pour it in.

What is it that thus cheats us and gulls us of our religion? that makes us thus constantly to tread the same ring and circle of duties, where we make no progress at

all forwards, and the farther we go, are still never the nearer to our journey's end? What is it that thus starves our religion, and makes it look like those *kine* in Pharaoh's dream, *ill-favoured, and lean-fleshed*, that it hath no colour in its face, no blood in its veins, no life nor heat at all in its members? What is it that doth thus bedwarf us in our Christianity? What low, sordid, unworthy principles do we act by, that thus hinder our growth, and make us stand at a stay, and keep us always at the very porch and entrance where we first began? Is it a sleepy, sluggish conceit, that it is enough for us if we be but once in a state of grace, if we have but once stepped over the threshold, we need not take so great pains to travel any farther? Or is it another damping, choking, stifling opinion, that Christ hath done all for us already without us, and nothing need more to be done within us? No matter how wicked we be in ourselves, for we have holiness without us; no matter how sickly and diseased our souls be within, for they have health without them. Why may we not as well be satisfied and contented to have happiness without us too, to all eternity, and so ourselves for ever continue miserable? *Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous: but he that committeth sin is of the devil.* I shall therefore exhort you in the wholesome words of St. Peter: *Give all diligence to add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity: for if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.* The Apostle still goes on, and I cannot leave him yet: *But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see far off, and hath forgotten that he was once purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall.* Let us not only talk and dispute of Christ, but let us indeed *put on the Lord Jesus Christ.* Having those great and precious promises which he hath given us, let us strive to be made *partakers of the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust:* and

being begotten again to a *lively hope* of enjoying Christ hereafter, *let us purify ourselves as he is pure.*

CUDWORTH.

*The Christian must work out his Salvation with fear and trembling.*

IT is the duty of every true Christian to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. To mention places for the proof of this were to transcribe the Bible: we can no where open this blessed book but we find this truth proved to us either directly, or by consequence, for it is the very genius of the Scripture. And yet it is strange in these days to see how dubiously some men (who would be thought admirers of free grace) speak of obedience and working, as if it were the brand of a legal spirit, and as great a stranger to a Christian's warrant, as it is to their practice. Oh, it is a soft and easy doctrine to bid men sit still and believe, as if God would translate men to heaven upon their couches, to tell them that all that they have now to do, is but to labour for more assurance, to praise God, and to sing hallelujahs unto him.—And so also it conduces much to their abundant comfort; does it not, to tell them that God sees no sin in them, nor requires any duty from them? That repentance and humiliation are legal things belonging only to younger persons, and not to the heirs of the promises? Oh! who could think it possible that such dreams and fantastic delusions could possess so many men's hearts that ever heard the Scripture speak in its own language, or that ever read what Christ himself, the Holy Ghost, or the blessed Apostles have written, who bid us to *work the works of God?* To give all diligence, to abound in all the fruits of righteousness? Is it possible that these notions should be dispersed by some, and entertained by others, but because it always hath been the policy of the devil, wherein he hath sped so well, still to vent those doctrines that indulge the flesh, under the name and patronage of free grace and Gospel attainments? But of this more hereafter. Let us now consider the reasons of this truth: and,

First, Wherefore is it that we are commanded to *strive that we may enter in at the strait gate?* So to run that we may obtain? So to wrestle that we may be able to stand? So to fight that we may lay hold on eternal life? Not to faint in our minds; nor to grow weary of well-

*doing?* Do not all these expressions imply great labour and pains? Can you strive, and run, and wrestle, and fight, and all this by doing nothing? Or were it needful to be taught not to grow faint, nor to be weary, when we have no work to do? Therefore it is the genius and sum of the Scripture to excite men to be always active and laborious in the ways of holiness and obedience.

Secondly, Consider wherefore it is that salvation is set forth to us under the notion of a reward; is it not to imply that we must work for it? A reward not indeed merited by our works; but yet a reward measured out to us, and conferred upon us, according to our works: *God will render to every one according to his works; to them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and immortality, he will render eternal life*, Rom. ii. 6, 7. And indeed it were very strange, if that God who will reward us with eternal life, according to our works, should yet lay a check upon the ingenuity of the new creature, thereby to account eternal life too low a motive to excite unto eternal life.

Thirdly, Consider is it not to this end that God hath implanted such an active principle of grace in the hearts of his servants, that thereby they might be enabled to work out their own salvation? If God would save you without working, why then hath he given you such an operative principle that you might work? Nay, I might affirm it, he might as well save you without grace as without works; for that is not grace that doth not put forth itself in working. Grace, if it be true, it will be working, it will rise in the thoughts, it will work in the affections, it will breathe in desires, appear in good works, and be very active and busy in the whole life and conversation. Now, not to work, is that which puts a check and restraint upon this active principle; it is to curb it in, when it would freely break forth into action upon every occasion given to it.

Fourthly, Why hath God so often promised us assistance, if it be not that thereby we should be encouraged to work? He stands by us to confirm our hearts, to strengthen our hands, to help our weakness, to quicken our deadness, to recruit our graces by continual supplies; and wherefore is all this but that we might work? God, rather than we shall not work, he himself will set us at work; nay, he will maintain us at

our work, and in our work, upon his own cost. He gives us aid, and promises assistance only for this end, that we might work out our own salvation. *We are not sufficient of ourselves*, says the Apostle, *as of ourselves to think any thing*, 2 Cor. iii. 5. What then? must we therefore sit still, because we are not sufficient? No, says he, for God, who finds us employment, will also find us strength; *our sufficiency is of God*. And therefore it is that God gives in assistances and supplies, that we might work the works of God. B<sup>R</sup>. HOPKINS.

How apt are we to misconstrue the Spirit of God to our own disadvantage! While the blessed Apostle bids us to work out our salvation *with fear and trembling*, he doth not bid us to work it out with doubt and distrust. It is the Psalmist's charge, that we should *serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice in him with trembling*; so that there is a fear without diffidence, and a trembling that may consist with joy. Trembling is an effect of fear; but this fear which we must affect, is reverential, not slavish, not distrustful. Indeed, when we look upon ourselves, and consider our own frailties and corruptions, and God's infinite justice, we have too just cause of doubt and dejection, yea, were it not for better helps, of utter despair; but when we cast up our eyes to the power of him that hath undertaken for us, and the faithfulness of him that hath promised, and the sure mercies of him that hath begun his good work in us, we can fear with confidence, and rejoice in our trembling; for what are our sins to his mercies, our unworthiness to his infinite merits, our weakness to his omnipotence? I will therefore so distrust myself, that I will be steadfastly confident in the God of my salvation; I will so tremble before the glorious majesty of my God, that I may not abate of the joy of his never-failing mercy. . . .

There cannot be a stronger motive to awe and obedience, than that which St. Peter enforceth, that *God is both a Father and a Judge*, 1 Pet. i. 17: the one is a title of love and mercy, the other of justice. Whatever God is, he is all that; he is all love and mercy; he is all justice. He is not so a Judge, that he hath waved the title and affection of a Father; he is not so a Father, that he will remit aught of his infinite justice as a Judge. *He is, he will*



ever be, both these in one; and we must fasten our eyes upon both these at once, and be accordingly affected unto both. He is a Father; therefore here must be a loving awe: he is a Judge; and therefore here must be an awful love and obedience. So must we lay hold upon the tender mercies of a Father, that we may rejoice continually; so must we apprehend the justice of a righteous Judge, that we do lovingly tremble. Why then should man despair? God is a Father. All the bowels of mortal and human love are straight to his. *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee*, saith the Lord, Isa. xlix. 15. That which is the title of his personality in divine relation, is also the title of his gracious relation to us—Father: neither can he be other than he is styled. And, contrarily, how dare men presume, since this Father is a Judge? It is for sinful flesh and blood to be partial: foolish parents may be apt to connive at the sins of their own offspring, because theirs; either they will not see them, or not hate them, or not censure them, or not punish them: the infinite justice of a God cannot wink at our failings; there is no debt of our sin but must be paid in ourselves, or our surety. If then we call him *Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work*, why do we not *pass the time of our sojourning here in fear?*

BR. HALL.

*Religion never out of place.*

BUT, alas! I doubt we generally arrive not to this pitch of religion, to deny the world, and all the pomp and glory of this largely extended train of vanity; but we easily content ourselves with some external forms of religion. We are too apt to look at a garish dress and attire of religion, or to be enamoured rather with some more specious and seemingly spiritual forms, than with the true spirit and power of godliness and religion itself. We are more taken commonly with the several new fashions that the luxuriant fancies of men are apt to contrive for it, than with the real power and simplicity thereof: and while we think ourselves to be growing in our knowledge, and moving on towards a state of perfection, we do but turn up and down from one kind of form to another; we are as apt still to draw it down into

as low, worldly, and mundane rites and ordinances, as ever it was before our Saviour made that glorious reformation therein, which took away these material crutches made up of carnal observances, upon which earthly minds so much lean, and are fain to underprop their religion with, which else would tumble down and fall to nothing: except we can cast it into such a certain set of duties and system of opinions, that we may see it altogether from one end to another, we are afraid lest it should become too abstruse a thing and vanish away from us.

I would not be misunderstood to speak against those duties and ordinances which are necessary means appointed by God to promote us in the ways of piety: but I fear we are too apt to sink all our religion into these, and so to embody it, that we may as it were touch and feel it, because we are so little acquainted with the high and spiritual nature of it, which is too subtle for gross and carnal minds to converse with. I fear our vulgar sort of Christians are wont so to look upon such kind of models of divinity and religious performances, which were intended to help our dull minds to a more lively sense of God and true goodness, as those things that claim the whole of their religion: and therefore are too apt to think themselves absolved from it, except at some solemn times of more especial addresses to God; and that this wedding garment of holy thoughts and divine affections is not for every day's wearing, but only then to be put on when we come to the marriage-feast and festivals of heaven: as if religion were fast locked and bound up in some sacred solemnities, and so incarcerated and incorporated into some divine mysteries, as the superstitious heathen of old thought, that it might not stir abroad and wander too far out of these hallowed cloisters, and grow too busy with us in our secular employments. We have learned to distinguish too subtly I doubt in our lives and conversations *inter sacrum et profanum*, our religious approaches to God and our worldly affairs. I know our conversation and demeanour in this world is not nor can well be, all of a piece, and there will be several degrees of sanctity in the lives of the best men, as there were once in the land of Canaan: but yet I think a good man should always find himself upon holy ground, and never depart

so far into the affairs of this life, as to be without either the call or compass of religion; he should always think wheresoever he is *etiam ibi Dei sunt*, that God and the blessed angels are there, with whom he should converse in a way of purity. We must not think that religion serves to paint our faces, to reform our looks, or only to inform our heads, or instruct and tune our tongues; no, nor only to tie our hands, and make out outward man more demure, and bring our bodies and bodily actions into a better decorum: but its main business is to purge and reform our hearts and all the illicit actions and motions thereof.

REV. J. SMITH.

### *Nature of Spiritual love to God.*

SOME say that all love arises from self-love; and that it is impossible in the nature of things, for any man to have any love to God, or any other being, but that love to himself must be the foundation of it. But I humbly suppose it is for want of consideration that they say so. They argue, that whoever loves God, and so desires his glory or the enjoyment of him, he desires these things as his own happiness; the glory of God, and the beholding and enjoying his perfections, are considered as things agreeable to him, tending to make him happy; he places his happiness in them, and desires them as things which (if they were obtained) would be delightful to him, or would fill him with delight and joy, and so make him happy. And so, they say, it is from self-love, or a desire of his own happiness, that he desires God should be glorified, and desires to behold and enjoy his glorious perfections. But then they ought to consider a little further, and inquire how the man came to place his happiness in God's being glorified, and in contemplating and enjoying God's perfections. There is no doubt, but that after God's glory, and the beholding his perfections, are become so agreeable to him, that he places his highest happiness in these things, then he will desire them, as he desires his own happiness. But how came these things to be so agreeable to him that he esteems it his highest happiness to glorify God, &c.? is not this the fruit of love? a man must first love God, or have his heart united to him, before he will esteem God's good his own, and before he will desire the glorifying and enjoying of God as his happiness. It is not strong

arguing, that because after a man has his heart united to God in love, as a fruit of this, he desires his glory and enjoyment as his own happiness, that therefore a desire of this happiness of his own must needs be the cause and foundation of his love: unless it be strong arguing, that because a father begat a son, that therefore his son certainly begat him. If after a man loves God, and has his heart so united to him, as to look upon God as his chief good, and on God's good as his own, it will be a consequence and fruit of this, that even self-love, or love to his own happiness, will cause him to desire the glorifying and enjoying of God; it will not thence follow, that this very exercise of self-love went before his love to God, and that his love to God was a consequence and fruit of that. Something else, entirely distinct from self-love, might be the cause of this, viz. a change made in the views of his mind, and relish of his heart: whereby he apprehends a beauty, glory, and supreme good, in God's nature, as it is in itself. This may be the thing that first draws his heart to him, and causes his heart to be united to him, prior to all considerations of his own interest or happiness, although after this, and as a fruit of this, he necessarily seeks his interest and happiness in God.

There is such a thing as a kind of love or affection that a man may have towards persons or things, which does properly arise from self-love; a preconceived relation to himself, or some respect already manifested by another to him, or some benefit already received or depended on, is truly the first foundation of his love, and what his affection does wholly arise from; and is what precedes any relish of, or delight in the nature and qualities inherent in the being beloved, as beautiful and amiable. When the first thing that draws a man's benevolence to another is the beholding those qualifications and properties in him, which appear to him lovely in themselves, and the subject of them, on this account, worthy of esteem and good-will, love arises in a very different manner, than when it first arises from some gift bestowed by another, or depended on from him, as a judge loves and favours a man that has bribed him; or from the relation he supposes another has to him, as a man who loves another, because he looks upon him as his child.—

When love to another arises thus, it does truly and properly arise from self-love.

That kind of affection to God or Jesus Christ, which does thus properly arise from self-love, cannot be a truly gracious and spiritual love, as appears from what has been said already: for self-love is a principle entirely natural, and as much in the hearts of devils as angels; and therefore surely nothing that is the mere result of it can be supernatural and divine, in the manner before described. Christ plainly speaks of this kind of love, as what is nothing beyond the love of wicked men. *If ye love them that love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them; Luke vi. 32.* And the devil himself knew that that kind of respect to God which was so mercenary, as to be only for benefits received or depended on (which is all one), is worthless in the sight of God; otherwise he never would have made use of such a slander before God, against Job, as in Job i. 9, 10, *Doth Job serve God for nought? hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house?*

Nor would God ever have implicitly allowed the objection to have been good, in case the accusation had been true, by allowing that the matter should be tried, and that Job should be so dealt with, that it might appear in the event, whether Job's respect to God was thus mercenary or no, and by putting the proof of the sincerity and goodness of his respect upon that issue.

It is unreasonable to think otherwise, than that the first foundation of a true love

to God, is that whereby he is in himself lovely, or worthy to be loved, or the supreme loveliness of his nature. This is certainly what makes him chiefly amiable. What chiefly makes a man, or any creature lovely, is his excellency; and so what chiefly renders God lovely, and must undoubtedly be the chief ground of true love, is his excellency. God's nature, or the divinity, is infinitely excellent; yea, it is infinite beauty, brightness, and glory itself. But how can that be true love of this excellent and lovely nature, which is not built on the foundation of its true loveliness? how can that be true love of beauty and brightness, which is not for beauty and brightness' sake? how can that be a true prizing of that which is in itself infinitely worthy and precious, which is not for the sake of its worthiness and preciousness? This infinite excellency of the divine nature, as it is in itself, is the true ground of all that is good in God in any respect; but how can a man truly and rightly love God, without loving him for that excellency in him, which is the foundation of all that is in any manner of respect good or desirable in him? they whose affection to good is founded first on his profitableness to them, their affection begins at the wrong end; they regard God only for the utmost limit of the stream of divine good, where it touches them, and reaches their interest; and have no respect to that infinite glory of God's nature, which is the original good, and the true fountain of all good, the first fountain of all loveliness of every kind, and so the first foundation of all true love.

PRES. EDWARDS.

### SECTION III.—ON HOLINESS.

*Nature of Holiness, and how it is to be obtained.*

LET me not be thought tedious, or be accused of running into needless repetitions, in pressing this point with so much earnestness. It is, in fact, a point which can never be too much insisted on. It is the cardinal point on which the whole of Christianity turns; on which it is peculiarly proper in this place to be perfectly distinct. There have been some who have imagined that the wrath of God was to be deprecated, or his favour conciliated, by

austerities and penances, or even by forms and ceremonies, and external observances. But all men of enlightened understandings, who acknowledge the moral government of God, must also acknowledge that vice must offend, and virtue delight him. In short they must, more or less, assent to the Scripture declaration, *without holiness no man shall see the Lord.* But the grand distinction which subsists between the true Christian and all other religionists (the class of persons in particular whom it is my object to address) is concerning the nature of this holiness, and the way in which

it is to be obtained. The views entertained by the latter of the nature of holiness are of all degrees of inadequateness ; and they conceive it is to be obtained by their own natural unassisted efforts : or, if they admit some vague indistinct notion of the assistance of the Holy Spirit, it is unquestionably obvious, on conversing with them, that this does not constitute the main practical ground of their dependence. But the nature of that holiness which the true Christian seeks to possess, is no other than the restoration of the image of God to his soul ; and as to the manner of acquiring it, disclaiming, with indignation, every idea of attaining it by his own strength, he rests altogether on the operation of God's Holy Spirit, which is promised to all who cordially embrace the Gospel. He knows, therefore, that this holiness is not to *precede* his reconciliation with God, and be its *cause* ; but to *follow* it, and be its *effect*. That, in short, it is by *faith in Christ only*\* that he is to be justified in the sight of God ; to be delivered from the condition of a child of wrath, and a slave of Satan ; to be adopted into the family of God ; to become an heir of God and joint heir with Christ, entitled to all the privileges which belong to this high relation ; here, to the Spirit of Grace, and a partial renewal after the image of his Creator ; hereafter, to the more perfect possession of the divine likeness, and an inheritance of eternal glory.

And, as it is in this way that, in obedience to the dictates of the Gospel, the true Christian must originally become possessed of the vital spirit and living principle of universal holiness ; so, in order to grow in grace, he must also study in the same school : finding in the consideration of the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and in the contemplation of the life and character and sufferings of our blessed Saviour, the elements of all practical wisdom, and an inexhaustible storehouse of instructions and motives, no otherwise to be so well supplied. From the neglect of these peculiar doctrines arise the main practical errors of the bulk of professed Christians. These gigantic truths retained in view, would put to shame the littleness of their dwarfish morality. It would be impossible for them to make these harmo-

nise with their inadequate conceptions of the wretchedness and danger of our natural state, which is represented in Scripture as having so powerfully called forth the compassion of God, that he sent his only-begotten Son to rescue us. Where now are their low views of the worth of the soul, when means like these were taken to redeem it ? Where now their inadequate conceptions of the guilt of sin, for which in the divine counsels it seemed requisite that an atonement no less costly should be made than that of the blood of the only-begotten Son of God ? How can they reconcile their low standard of Christian practice with the representation of our being *temples of the Holy Ghost* ; their cold sense of obligation, and scanty grudging returns of service, with the glowing gratitude of those who, having been *delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son*, may well conceive that the labours of a whole life will be but an imperfect expression of their thankfulness ?

The peculiar doctrines of the Gospel being once admitted, the conclusions which have been now suggested are clear and obvious deductions of reason. But our neglect of these important truths is still less pardonable, because they are distinctly and repeatedly applied in Scripture to the very purposes in question ; and the whole superstructure of Christian morals is grounded on their deep and ample basis. Sometimes these truths are represented in Scripture, generally, as furnishing Christians with a vigorous and ever present principle of universal obedience : and almost every particular Christian duty is occasionally traced to them as to its proper source. They are every where represented as warming the hearts of the people of God on earth with continual admiration, and thankfulness, and love, and joy ; as enabling them to triumph over the attack of the last great enemy, and, as calling forth afresh in heaven the ardent effusions of their unexhausted gratitude.

If then we would indeed be *filled with wisdom and spiritual understanding*, if we would *walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God* ; here let us fix our eyes ! *Laying aside every weight, and the sin that does so easily beset us, let us run with patience the race that is set before us,*

\* Here again let it be remarked, that faith, where genuine, is always accompanied with repentance, abhorrence of sin, &c,

LOOKING UNTO JESUS, *the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*; Heb. xii. 1, 2.

Here best we may learn the infinite importance of Christianity; how little it deserves to be treated in that slight and superficial way in which it is in these days regarded by the bulk of nominal Christians, who are apt to think it enough, and almost equally pleasing to God, to be religious in any way, and upon any system. What exquisite folly must it be to risk the soul on such a presumption, in direct opposition to the dictates of reason, and the express declaration of the word of God! *How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?* . . .

Thus, never let it be forgotten, the main distinction between real Christianity and the system of the bulk of nominal Christians, chiefly consists in the different place which is assigned in the two schemes to the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel. These, in the scheme of nominal Christians, if admitted at all, appear but like the stars of the firmament to the ordinary eye. Those splendid luminaries draw forth perhaps, occasionally, a transient expression of admiration when we behold their beauty, or hear of their distances, magnitudes, or properties: now and then too we are led, perhaps, to muse upon their possible uses; but however curious as subjects of speculation, it must after all be confessed, they twinkle to the common observer with a vain and idle lustre; and, except in the dreams of the astrologer, have no influence on human happiness, or any concern with the course and order of the world. But to the real Christian, on the contrary, these peculiar doctrines constitute the centre to which he gravitates! the very sun of his system! the origin of all that is excellent and lovely! the source of light, and life, and motion, and genial warmth, and plastic energy! Dim is the light of Reason, and cold and comfortless our state, while left to her unassisted guidance. Even the Old Testament itself, though a revelation from heaven, shines with but feeble and scanty rays. But the blessed truths of the Gospel are now unveiled to our eyes, and we are called upon to behold and to enjoy *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ*,

in the full radiance of its meridian splendour. The words of inspiration best express our highly favoured state—*we all, with open face beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.*

Thou art the source and centre of all minds,  
Their only point of rest, ETERNAL WORD;  
From Thee departing, they are lost, and rove •  
At random, without honour, hope, or peace:  
From Thee is all that soothes the life of man;  
His high endeavour, and his glad success;  
His strength to suffer and his will to serve.  
But O! Thou bounteous Giver of all good!  
Thou art of all Thy gifts Thyself the crown:  
Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor,  
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.

WILBERFORCE.

### *How is Man to attain to so high a degree of Holiness?*

BUT who am I, poor, proud sinful dust and ashes, that I should expect ever to live so holy, so heavenly, as is here supposed? *Can grapes be gathered from thorns, or figs from thistles?* Can the fruit be sweet when the root is bitter? or the streams healthful when the fountain is poisoned? No; I must either get me a new and better heart, or else it will be impossible for me ever to lead a new and better life. But how must I come by this pearl of inestimable value, a *new heart*? Can I purchase it with my own riches, or find it in my own field? Can I raise it from sin to holiness, from earth to heaven, or from myself to God? Alas! I have endeavoured it, but I find, by woful experience, I cannot attain to it. I have been lifting and heaving again and again to raise it out of the mire and clay of sin and corruption; but, alas! it will not stir. I have rubbed and chafed it with one threatening after another, and all to get heat and life into it, but still it is as cold and dead as ever. I have brought it to the promises, and set it under the droppings of the sanctuary; I have shown it the beauty of Christ and the deformity of sin; but yet it is a hard and sinful, an earthly and sensual heart still. What therefore shall I do with it? O my God, I bring it unto thee! Thou that madest it a heart at first, canst only make it a new heart now. O do thou purify and refine it, and *renew a right spirit within me!* Do thou take it into thy hands, and, out of thine infinite goodness, new mould it up, by

thine own grace, into an exact conformity to thine own will ! Do thou but give me a new heart, and I shall promise thee, by thy grace, to lead a new life and become a new creature ! Do thou but clear the fountain, and I shall endeavour to look to the streams that flow from it !

BP. BEVERIDGE.

*Different kinds of perfection which are, and are not, attainable.*

It becomes the wisdom of God to raise his people by degrees to the highest pitch of holiness. As, in the creation of the first world, he began with a rude chaos and indigested mass, which in six successive days he fashioned into this beautiful frame, till, having given the finishing hand, *he rested on the Sabbath*, Gen. ii. 2 ; so in the creation of the new world of grace, beginning with nothing, he gradually leads his people higher and higher, till on the expiration of this earthly week, on the dawn of the heavenly sabbath, he crowns them at once with holiness and glory.

It cannot indeed be denied, that sometimes the Scripture makes mention of some, who are said to be *perfect* even in this life : but it is to be observed, that the term *perfection* is not always used in the same sense. For, 1st. There is a perfection of SINCERITY consisting in this, that a man serves God with an unfeigned heart, without any reigning hypocrisy. In this sense it is said of Job, that he was *יָשָׁר וְנָכוֹן, perfect and upright, and one that feared God and eschewed evil*, Job i. 1. In the same sense, Hezekiah protests that he had walked before God *in truth and with a perfect heart, and done what was good in his eyes*, Isa. xxxviii. 3. 2dly. There is a perfection of PARTS ; and that both *subjective*, with respect to the whole man, in so far as he is *sanctified wholly, in spirit, soul and body*, 1 Thess. v. 23 ; and *objective*, with respect to the whole law, when all and every one of the duties prescribed by God are observed without exception. Of this David was speaking, Psal. cxix. 128, *I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right ; and I hate every false way*. And it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, Luke i. 6, *and they walked in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, blameless*. 3dly. There is a COMPARATIVE perfection ascribed to

those who are advanced in knowledge, faith, and sanctification, in comparison of those who are still infants and untaught : in this manner John distinguishes little children, young men, and fathers, 1 John ii. 12, 13. In that sense Paul speaks of the *perfect*, 1 Cor. ii. 6. and Phil. iii. 15. 4thly. There is also an evangelical perfection, or with a veil or covering of grace, according to which these persons are looked upon as perfect, who sincerely endeavour after perfection, God, for the sake of Christ, graciously accepting the attempts of a ready mind, and accounting every thing to be done, because what is not done is forgiven. The Apostle speaks of this, *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not*, 2 Cor. viii. 12. Thus, *we are complete in Christ*, Col. ii. 10 ; his most perfect righteousness covering all our defects. However, this is to be understood in a proper manner ; for the judgment of God is always according to truth : he so judges of us and our actions, as they are ; and seeing we ourselves and our actions are imperfect, he cannot but judge us to be so. This is what we would say agreeable to Scripture,—that God, on account of the most perfect obedience of Christ, graciously accepts the sincerity of his people, nor less bountifully rewards them, than if their holiness was in every respect complete. 5thly, and lastly, There is also a perfection of DEGREES, by which a person performs all the commands of God with the full exertion of all his powers, without the least defect, having rooted up every depraved lust. This is what the law of God requires. And this is that perfection which we deny the saints to have in this life, though we willingly allow them all the other kinds above mentioned.

WITSIUS.

*The Cross of Christ the greatest Incentive to a Holy Life.*

THIS consideration is most useful to render us very humble and sensible of our weakness, our vileness, our wretchedness. For how low was that our fall, from which we could not be raised without such a depression of God's only Son ? How great is that impotency, which did need such a

succour to relieve it? How abominable must be that iniquity which might not be expiated without so costly a sacrifice? How deplorable is that misery which could not be removed without commutation of so strange a suffering? Would the Son of God have so *emptied* and abased himself for nothing?—would he have endured such pains and ignominies for a trifle? No, surely; if our guilt had been slight, if our case had been tolerable, the divine wisdom would have chosen a more cheap and easy remedy for us.

Is it not madness of us to be conceited for any worth in ourselves, to confide in any merit of our works, to glory in any thing belonging to us, to fancy ourselves brave, fine, happy persons, worthy of great respect and esteem; when as our unworthiness, our demerit, our forlorn estate did extort from the most gracious God a displeasure needing such a reconciliation, did impose upon the most glorious Son of God a necessity to undergo such a punishment in our behalf?

How can we reasonably pretend to any honour, or justly assume any regard to ourselves, when as the First-born of Heaven, the *Lord of glory*, partaker of Divine Majesty, was fain to *make himself of no reputation*, to put himself into the *garb of a servant*, and, under the imputation of a malefactor, to bear such disgrace and infamy in our room, in lieu of the confusion due to us?

What more palpable confutation can there be of human vanity and arrogance, of all *lofty imaginations*, all presumptuous confidences, all turgid humours, all fond self-pleasings and self-admirings, than is that tragical cross, wherein, as in a glass, our foul deformity, our pitiful meanness, our helpless infirmity, our sad wofulness are so plainly represented?

Well surely may we say with St. Austin, 'Let man now at length blush to be proud, for whom God is made so humble.' [And since (as he doth add) 'this great disease of soul did bring down the Almighty Physician from Heaven, did humble him to the form of a servant, did subject him to contumelies, did suspend him on a cross, that this tumour by virtue of so great a medicine might be cured;'] may not he well be presumed incurable, who is not cured of his pride by this medicine; in whom neither the reason of the case, nor the

force of such an example can work humility?

But farther, while this contemplation doth breed sober humility, it also should preserve us from base abjectness of mind: for it doth evidently demonstrate, that, according to God's infallible judgment, we are very considerable; that our souls are capable of high regard; that it is a great pity we should be lost and abandoned to ruin. For surely, had not God much esteemed and respected us, he would not for our sakes have so debased himself, or deigned to endure so much for our recovery; divine justice would not have exacted or accepted such a ransom for our souls, had they been of little worth. We should not therefore slight ourselves, nor demean ourselves like sorry contemptible wretches, as if we deserved no consideration, no pity from ourselves; as if we thought our souls not worth saving, which yet our Lord thought good to purchase at so dear a rate. By so despising or disregarding ourselves, do we not condemn the sentiments, do we not vilify the sufferings of our Lord; so with a pitiful meanness of spirit joining the most unworthy injustice and ingratitude?—Again,

How can we reflect upon this event without extreme displeasure against, and hearty detestation of our sins?—those sins which indeed did bring such tortures and such disgraces upon our blessed Redeemer. Judas, the wretch who betrayed him, the Jewish priests who did accuse and prosecute him, the wicked rout which did abusively insult over him, those cruel hands that smote him, those pitiless hearts that scorned him, those poisonous tongues that mocked him and reviled him, all those who were the instruments and abettors of his affliction—how do we loathe and abhor them? How do we detest their names, and execrate their memories? But how much greater reason have we to abominate our sins, which were the true, the principal actors of all that woful tragedy? *He was delivered for our offences*: they were indeed the traitors, which by the hands of Judas delivered him up. *He that knew no sin, was made sin for us*, that is, was accused, was condemned, was executed as a sinner for us. It was therefore we, who by our sins did impeach him; the spiteful priests were but our advocates:

we by them did adjudge and sentence him; Pilate was but drawn in against his will and conscience, to be our spokesman in that behalf: we by them did inflict that horrid punishment on him; the Roman executioners were but our representatives therein. *He became a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13: that is, all the mockery, derision, and contumely he endured, did proceed from us; the silly people were but properties acting our parts. Our sins were they that cried out, *Crucify him, crucify him*, with clamours more loud and more importunate than did all the Jewish rabble: it was they, which by the borrowed throats of that base people did so outrageously persecute him. *He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities*: it was they which, by the hands of the fierce soldiers, and of the rude populace, as by senseless engines, did buffet and scourge him; they by the nails and thorns did pierce his flesh, and rend his sacred body. Upon them therefore it is most just and fit that we should turn our hatred, that we should discharge our indignation.

And what in reason can be more powerful toward working penitential sorrow and remorse, than reflexion upon such horrible effects, proceeding from our sins? How can we forbear earnestly to grieve, considering ourselves by them to have been the perfidious betrayers, the unjust slanderers, the cruel persecutors, and barbarous murderers of a Person so innocent and lovely, so good and benign, so great and glorious; of God's own dear Son, of our best Friend, of our most gracious Redeemer?

If ingenuity will not operate so far, and hereby melt us into contrition; yet surely this consideration must needs affect us with a religious fear. For can we otherwise than tremble to think upon the heinous guilt of our sins, upon the dreadful fierceness of God's wrath against them, upon the impartial severity of divine judgment for them, all so manifestly discovered, all so livelily set forth in this dismal spectacle? If the view of an ordinary execution is apt to beget in us some terror, some dread of the law, some reverence toward authority; what awful impressions should this singular example of divine justice work upon us?

How greatly we should be moved thereby, what affections it should raise in us,

we may even learn from the most inanimate creatures: for the whole world did seem affected thereat with horror and confusion; the frame of things was discomposed and disturbed; all nature did feel a kind of compassion and compunction for it. The sun (as from aversion and shame) did hide his face, leaving the world covered for three hours with mournful blackness; the bowels of the earth did yearn and quake; the rocks did split; the veil of the temple was rent; the graves did open themselves, and the dead bodies were roused up. And can we then (who are the most concerned in the event) be more stupid than the earth, more obdurate than rocks, more drowsy than interred carcasses, the most insensible and immoveable things in nature?—But farther,

How can the meditation on this event do otherwise than hugely deter us from all wilful disobedience and commission of sin? For how thereby can we violate such engagements, and thwart such an example of obedience? How thereby can we abuse so wonderful goodness, and disoblige so transcendent charity? How thereby can we reject that gentle dominion over us, which our Redeemer did so dearly purchase, or renounce *the Lord that bought us* at so high a rate? With what heart can we bring up on the stage, and act over that direful tragedy, renewing all that pain and all that disgrace to our Saviour, as the Apostle teacheth that we do by apostacy, *crucifying to ourselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to an open shame*? Can we without horror *tread under foot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing*; (as the same divine Apostle saith all wilful transgressors do;) vilifying that most sacred and precious blood, so freely shed for the demonstration of God's mercy, and ratification of his gracious intentions toward us, as a thing of no special worth or consideration; despising all his so kind and painful endeavours for our salvation; defeating his most charitable purposes, and earnest desires for our welfare; rendering all his so bitter and loathsome sufferings in regard to us utterly vain and fruitless, yea indeed very hurtful and pernicious? For if the cross do not save us from our sins, it will much aggravate their guilt, and augment their punishment;



bringing a severer condemnation, and a sadder ruin on us.—Again,

This consideration affordeth very strong engagements to the practice of charity towards our neighbour. For what heart can be so hard that the blood of the cross cannot mollify into a charitable and compassionate sense? Can we forbear to love those toward whom our Saviour did bear so tender affection, for whom he was pleased to sustain so woful tortures and indignities? Shall we not, in obedience to his most urgent commands, in conformity to his most notable example, in grateful return to him for his benefits, who thus did gladly suffer for us, discharge this most sweet and easy duty towards his beloved friends? Shall we not be willing, by parting with a little superfluous stuff for the relief of our poor brother, to requite and gratify him, who, to succour us in our distress, most bountifully did part with his wealth, with his glory, with his pleasure, with his life itself? Shall we not meekly comport with an infirmity, not bear a petty neglect, not forgive a small injury to our brother, when as our Lord did for us, and from us bear a cross, to procure remission for our innumerable and most heinous affronts and offences against Almighty God? Can a heart void of mercy and pity, with any reason or modesty pretend to the mercies and compassions of the cross? Can we hope, that God for Christ's sake will pardon us, if we for Christ's sake will not forgive our neighbour?

Can we hear our Lord saying to us, *This is my command, That ye love one another, as I have loved you*; and, *Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another*? Can we hear St. Paul exhorting, *Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour*; and, *We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak—For even Christ pleased not himself, but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee, fell on me*? Can we attend to St. John's arguing, *Beloved, if God so loved us, then ought we also to love one another. Hereby we perceive the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: wherefore we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren*?

Can we, I say, consider such precepts,

and such discourses, without effectually being disposed to comply with them for the sake of our crucified Saviour; all whose life was nothing else but one continual recommendation and enforcement of this duty, but his death especially was a pattern most obliging, most incentive thereto? This use of the point is the more to be regarded, because the Apostle doth apply it hereto; for having pathetically exhorted the Philippians to all kinds of charity and humble condescension, he subjoineth, *Let this mind be in you, which was in Christ Jesus:—Who, being in the form of God,* &c. Phil. ii. 5.

But furthermore, what can be more operative than this point toward breeding a disregard of this world with all its deceitful vanities, and mischievous delights; toward reconciling our minds to the worst condition into which it can bring us; toward supporting our hearts under the heaviest pressures of affliction which it can lay upon us? For can we reasonably expect, can we eagerly affect, can we ardently desire great prosperity, when as the Son of God, our Lord and Master, did only taste such adversity? How can we refuse, in submission to God's pleasure, contentedly to bear a slight grievance, when as our Saviour gladly did bear a cross, infinitely more distasteful to carnal will and sense than any that can befall us? Who now can admire those splendid trifles, which our Lord never did regard in his life, and which at his death only did serve to mock and abuse him? Who can relish those sordid pleasures, of which he living did not vouchsafe to taste, and the contraries whereof he dying chose to feel in all extremity? Who can disdain or despise a state of sorrow and disgrace, which he, by voluntary susception of it, hath so dignified and graced; by which we so near resemble and become conformable to him; by which we concur and partake with him; yea, by which in some cases we may promote, and after a sort complete his designs, *filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in our flesh*?

Who now can hugely prefer being esteemed, approved, favoured, commended by men, before infamy, reproach, derision, and persecution from them; especially when these do follow conscientious adherence to righteousness? Who can be very

ambitious of worldly honour and repute, covetous of wealth, or greedy of pleasure, who doth observe the Son of God choosing rather to hang upon a cross, than to sit upon a throne; inviting the clamours of scorn and spite, rather than acclamations of blessing and praise; divesting himself of all secular power, pomp, plenty, conveniences, and solaces; embracing the garb of a slave, and the repute of a malefactor, before the dignity and respect of a Prince, which were his due, which he most easily could have obtained?

Can we imagine it a very happy thing, to be high and prosperous in this world, to swim in affluence and pleasure? Can we take it for a misery, to be mean and low, to conflict with some wants and straits here; seeing the Fountain of all happiness did himself purposely condescend to so forlorn a state, and was pleased to become so deep a sufferer? If with devout eyes of our mind we do behold our Lord hanging naked upon a gibbet, besmeared all over with streams of his own blood, groaning under smart anguish of pain, encompassed with all sorts of disgraceful abuses, *yielding* (as it was foretold of him) *his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them who plucked off the hair, hiding not his face from shame and spitting*, Isa. lvi.; will not the imagination of such a spectacle dim the lustre of all earthly grandeurs and beauties, damp the sense of all carnal delights and satisfactions, quash all that extravagant glee which we can find in any wild frolics or riotous merriments? Will it not stain all our pride, and check our wantonness? Will it not dispose our minds to be sober, placing our happiness in things of another nature, seeking our content in matters of higher importance; preferring obedience to the will of God, before compliance with the fancies and desires of men; according to that precept of St. Peter, *Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind—so as no longer to live the remaining time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God?*

DR. BARROW.

*The Practice of Holiness flows from the Love of God.*

CHRISTIAN virtue has a deeper and bet-

ter original than any love of virtue whatsoever, or than any complacency in one's own actions. But faith, which represents God to the soul as infinitely good and perfectly holy, and the most bountiful rewarder of good actions, as also his laws as full of equity and justice, inflames the soul with a love of a gracious God, and of his most equitable laws, and to deem nothing preferable to, nothing more valuable than, by a conformity to those laws, to resemble him in his measure in holiness, and in that resemblance to please him. That God looking down as it were out of himself, and from heaven, may also find upon earth what to delight himself in, as his copy; which is the highest pleasure of a holy soul. So that it loves not virtue for itself alone, but for God whose image it is, and whom in the practice of virtue it pleases. From this love to God springs the practice of true holiness.

I cannot but transcribe an excellent passage of Clemens Alexandrinus to this purpose, who, Stromat. lib. v. p. 532, thus gives us the picture of a holy person: 'He who obeys the bare call so far as he is called, labours after knowledge neither from fear nor from pleasure; for he does not consider whether any profitable gain or external pleasure will ensue, but, being constrained by the love of what is truly amiable, and thereby excited to his duty, he is a pious worshipper of God. Were we therefore to suppose him to have received from God a liberty to what was forbidden, without any apprehension of punishment; nay moreover, had he a promise of receiving the reward of the blessed, and besides was he persuaded that his actions should escape the notice of God, (which by the way is impossible,) he could never be prevailed with to act contrary to right reason, after he had once chosen what is really lovely and eligible of itself, and on that account to be loved and desired.' Than which nothing can be said more sublime.

He would have a holy or sanctified person do every thing from a principle of love. 'It becomes him who is perfect, to be in the exercise of love, and so endeavour after the divine favour and friendship, while he performs the commandments by love.' But this love has not renown, nor any other advantage but virtue itself, pure virtue, for its object: so he frames his life

after the image and resemblance of God, no longer for the sake of renown, or, as the philosophers speak, *εὐκλείας of a splendid name*; nor from the view of reward, either from God or men. Moreover, what renders virtue amiable to him, is not that philosophical agreement it has with right reason, but because he beholds in it a resemblance to God, than which nothing can be imagined more amiable: for thus he describes it:—what is *truly good*, he calls *truly desirable*, saying, *it is good by an assimilation to God to become impassive and virtuous*.

Yet we are not so to understand these things, as if in the practice of holiness we were not allowed to pay any regard to our own advantage, and that all love of ourselves ought in this case quite to disappear. We are not only allowed but commanded to love ourselves; nor are we bound to love our neighbour without a love for ourselves. And this is not written, but a natural law, which we have learned from no other quarter, but have received it from nature herself: *no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it*, Eph. v. 29. We may also be lawfully stirred up to the diligent practice of holiness by this love of ourselves. God himself, by this enticing motive, invites his people, promising that *their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*, 1 Cor. xv. 58. And to what, pray, tend all those promises by which he has recommended his commandments to us, but that, being excited by a desire of them, we should more cheerfully obey him? Not to love the promised good, is to throw contempt on the goodness of a promising God. By the love of them not to be stirred up to piety, is to abuse them to some other purpose than God ever intended. David himself confessed, that the commandments of God were, even on that account, *more to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and the honey-comb; because in keeping of them there is a great reward*, Psal. xix. 10, 12. And the faith of Moses is for the same reason commended, because *he had a respect unto the recompense of the reward*, Heb. xi. 26. Nay, that faith is required as necessary for all who come to God, whereby they may believe that *he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, verse 6.

But then here also the love of ourselves

ought to spring from the love of God, be subordinate thereto, and rendered back to him. We must not love God on our own account, so as to consider ourselves as the end, and God as the means, by which we are made happy in the enjoyment of him; but because we are God's property, whom we ought to love above all, and therefore for his sake we are bound to ourselves. We are further to seek our own good, that therein we may taste the sweetness of the Lord, and that thereby we may be so much the more improved and enriched as God's peculiar treasure. Thus the love of ourselves is at last swallowed up in that ocean of divine love.

WITSIUS.

### *Communion with God the only stay of Holy Duties.*

CHRISTIANS, you may lose time in the very service of God, if you are not careful therein to converse with him. Take heed of a light spirit in serious performances. God looks upon the heart. Some serious preparation is necessary before you approach the presence of the high and holy God. It is a blessed sight to see souls working towards God, gasping and panting after the Lord Jesus Christ. O labour for such a frame of heart, and bewail a narrow and contracted spirit. Do not perform duties for duties' sake, so as to make duties the end of duties; but as the means by which the soul may draw nigh to God, and meet with him. The countenance and presence of God in a duty, is the very suburbs of glory, yea, the very gate of heaven. Let this be in thy thoughts, and the very purpose of thy heart, and expect it vehemently in every access to God. Let thy soul follow hard after God, and say, One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. Duties alone are only the outward court, only the form, the shell of religion; as pipes without water, as sails without wind, or as a body without a soul, that hath no life. The increase of your grace and holiness depends upon your acquaintance and communion with the God of grace. JOHN FOX.

*Why Christianity requires so high a degree of Purity and Holiness.*

WE have a very low and imperfect idea

of the nature of Christianity, if we consider it only as it stands connected with this life, and our happiness on earth. Doubtless it ministers to our peace and comfort *here*; it regulates our passions, and directs us to discharge the duties of our several stations with fidelity and diligence: but the same end is proposed, though it may not be so fully attained, by every scheme of philosophy and religion which have been taught in the world. Christianity has a view to far nobler and more extensive objects: it is to be considered as connected with God's glory, as well as man's happiness; with the honour of Christ, as well as man's salvation; and with the boundless ages of eternity, as well as the few years of man's existence upon earth. The plan was formed; the sacrifice of the Lamb of God appointed; and men were destined to inhabit the realms of glory, before the foundations of the world were laid. The ultimate end was to bring them to Heaven; the means, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the sanctifying power of his Spirit; the subordinate end, the preparation of a corrupt race for that state of glory which they who were made meet for it should inherit.

The consideration of such an end in view, goes far to explain the reasons why such means are used, and why the purity and holiness required are so very great. Imagine the chief object of the Gospel to be that of regulating our unruly passions, so that we may pass our lives in ease and comfort here; and there appears but little reason why the Son of God should be our Redeemer, or why we should need the teaching and sanctification of his Spirit. The light and strength of reason might accomplish this end; or, at least, a much smaller portion of virtue than Christianity requires would be sufficient to attain it. There would be no occasion for that high degree of self-denial; that mortification of sin; that deadness to the world; that knowledge of God and his attributes, and those holy affections which it enjoins. A Deist might be a good neighbour, a useful citizen, a tender father, and a kind friend.—But take into consideration a future state, the nature of Heaven, the glory of God and of Christ; and we see that a real Christian only is fitted for the inheritance of the saints in light. He alone possesses those dispositions, those sentiments of de-

votion, those holy affections which are the proper qualifications for such a state. The morality of a Deist would be sufficient, were his soul as mortal as his body; but when we consider man as an immortal spirit, training up for happiness in Heaven, we see the absolute need of the Gospel to prepare him for it.

Christianity, then, is intended to make us meet for Heaven. By nature we are unfit for that blessed place: our desires and pleasures, our habits of acting and modes of thinking, the motives and principles by which our conduct is framed, are all unsuitable. We could contribute nothing to the bliss of its inhabitants, nor could they minister to ours. The very enjoyments of the place would be no enjoyments to us.—But by the influence of the Gospel, where it strikes root in the heart, a new and Divine life is begun; in which may be perceived the rudiments of heavenly virtue, the seeds of infinite happiness, and the elements of eternal glory. There may be traced in it the same principles which operate in the glorified spirits themselves; the same end in view,—the glory of God; the same renunciation of our own will; the same agency producing peace and holiness, namely, the Holy Spirit; the same sentiments of gratitude, and songs of praise, and objects of adoration; the same harmony and love; the same sources of refined and sacred pleasure. The difference in all these respects lies rather in the degree of strength, and purity, and completeness, than in the kind. Every thing below is weak, is imperfect, is defiled; but, as far as there is the spirit of true Christianity at all, it is of the same nature, has the same end, is produced by the same Agent, as the blessedness of Heaven.

Consider Christianity in this light, and we shall see why it should require from us a much higher degree of purity and holiness, and other kinds of principles and affections, than would be necessary were its operation confined to the present world. The nature of the education which we give to a child is directed by the station of life which he is intended afterwards to fill. To the heir of a great empire we should endeavour to communicate not merely the principles of honesty, frugality, and common justice; but virtues of a higher and nobler stamp; such as munificence, mag-

nanimity, and comprehension of mind. Now this life is our school for Heaven; and, under the tuition of the Gospel, we are trained for the exercises and enjoyments of Heaven. Hence a high degree of purity and strictness is demanded;—desires rising above this sordid earth, and stretching into immortality; holy affections and heavenly graces, such as will be called into exercise in that better state, and make us meet to enjoy it.

REV. H. VENN.

### *Beauty of Holiness.*

WHEN the true beauty and amiableness of the holiness, or true moral good, that is in divine things is discovered to the soul, it, as it were, opens a new world to its views. This shews the glory of all the perfections of God, and of every thing appertaining to the Divine Being. For, as was observed before, the beauty of all arises from God's moral perfection. This shews the glory of all God's works, both of creation and providence. For it is the special glory of them, that God's holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and goodness, are so manifested in them; and without these moral perfections, there would be no glory in that power and skill with which they are wrought. The glorifying of God's moral perfections, is the special end of all the works of God's hands. By this sense of the moral beauty of divine things, is understood the sufficiency of Christ as a Mediator; for it is only by the discovery of the beauty of the moral perfection of Christ, that the believer is let into the knowledge of the excellency of his person, so as to know any thing more of it than the devils do; and it is only by the knowledge of the excellency of Christ's person, that any know his sufficiency as a mediator; for the latter depends upon, and arises from the former. It is by seeing the excellency of Christ's person, that the saints are made sensible of the preciousness of his blood, and its sufficiency to atone for sin: for therein consists the preciousness of Christ's blood, that it is the blood of so excellent and amiable a person. And on this depends the meritoriousness of his obedience, and sufficiency and prevalence of his intercession. By this sight of the moral beauty of divine things, is seen the beauty of the way of

salvation by Christ; for that consists in the beauty of the moral perfections of God, which wonderfully shines forth in every step of this method of salvation, from beginning to end. By this is seen the fitness and suitableness of this way; for this wholly consists in its tendency to deliver us from sin and hell, and to bring us to the happiness which consists in the possession and enjoyment of moral good, in a way sweetly agreeing with God's moral perfections. And in the way's being contrived so as to attain these ends, consists the excellent wisdom of that way. By this is seen the excellency of the word of God. Take away all the moral beauty and sweetness in the Word, and the Bible is left wholly a dead letter, a dry, lifeless, tasteless thing. By this is seen the true foundation of our duty, the worthiness of God to be so esteemed, honoured, loved, submitted to, and served, as he requires of us; and the amiableness of the duties themselves that are required of us. And by this is seen the true evil of sin: for he who sees the beauty of holiness, must necessarily see the hatefulness of sin, its contrary. By this men understand the true glory of Heaven, which consists in the beauty and happiness that is in holiness. By this is seen the amiableness and happiness of both saints and angels. He that sees the beauty of holiness, or true moral good, sees the greatest and most important thing in the world, which is the fulness of all things, without which all the world is empty, no better than nothing, yea, worse than nothing. Unless this is seen, nothing is seen that is worth the seeing; for there is no other true excellency or beauty. Unless this be understood, nothing is understood that is worthy of the exercise of the noble faculty of understanding. This is the beauty of the Godhead, and the divinity of Divinity, (if I may so speak,) the good of the infinite Fountain of good; without which God himself (if that were possible to be) would be an infinite evil; without which we ourselves had better never have been; and without which there had better have been no being. He therefore in effect knows nothing, that knows not this; his knowledge is but the shadow of knowledge, or the form of knowledge, as the Apostle calls it. Well therefore may the Scriptures represent those who are destitute of that spiritual sense, by

which is perceived the beauty of holiness, as totally blind, deaf, and senseless, yea, dead. And well may regeneration, in which this divine sense is given to the soul by its Creator, be represented as opening the blind eyes, and raising the dead, and bringing a person into a new world. For if what has been said be considered, it will be manifest, that when a person has this sense and knowledge given him, he will view nothing as he did before; though before he knew all things *after the flesh, yet henceforth he will know them so no more; and he is become a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*; agreeable to 2 Cor. v. 16, 17.

And besides the things that have been already mentioned, there arises from this sense of spiritual beauty, a true experimental knowledge of religion, which is of itself as it were a new world of knowledge. He that sees not the beauty of holiness, knows not what one of the graces of God's Spirit is; he is destitute of any idea or conception of all gracious exercises of soul, and all holy comforts and delights, and all effects of the saving influences of the Spirit of God on the heart; and so is ignorant of the greatest works of God, the most important and glorious effects of his power upon the creature: and also is wholly ignorant of the saints as saints; he knows not what they are; and in effect is ignorant of the whole spiritual world.

Things being thus, it plainly appears, that God's implanting that spiritual supernatural sense which has been spoken of, makes a great change in a man. And were it not for the very imperfect degree, in which this sense is commonly given at first, or the small degree of this glorious light that first dawns upon the soul; the change made by this spiritual opening of the eyes in conversion, would be much greater, and more remarkable every way, than if a man, who had been born blind, and with only the other four senses, should continue so a long time, and then at once should have the sense of seeing imparted to him, in the midst of the clear light of the sun, discovering a world of visible objects. For though sight be more noble than any of the other external senses, yet this spiritual sense which has been spoken of, is infinitely more noble than that, or any other principle of discerning that a

man naturally has, and the object of this sense infinitely greater and more important.

PRES. EDWARDS.

I shall commend only some few instances, that you may see how little reason and inducement a soul conformed to the holy will of God, hath to seek its comforts and contents elsewhere. Faith corresponds to the truth of God, as it respects divine revelations. How pleasant is it to give up our understandings to the conduct of so safe a guide; to the view of so admirable things as he reveals! It corresponds to his goodness, as it respects its offers. How delectable is it to be filling an empty soul from the divine fulness! What pleasure attends the exercise of this faith towards the person of the Mediator, viewing him in all his glorious excellencies, receiving him in all his gracious communications by this eye and hand! How pleasant is it to exercise it in reference to another world! living by it in a daily prospect of eternity; in reference to this world, to live without care in a cheerful dependence on him that hath undertaken to care for us!

Repentance is that by which we become like the holy God; to whom our sin hath made us most unlike before. How sweet are kind relentings, penitential tears, and the return of the soul to its God, and to a right mind! And who can conceive the ravishing pleasures of love to God, wherein we not only imitate, but intimately unite with him, who is love itself! How pleasant to let our souls dissolve here, and flow into the ocean the element of love! Our fear corresponds to his excellent greatness; and is not (as it is a part of the new creature in us) a tormenting, servile passion, but a due respectfulness and observance of God; and there is no mean pleasure in that holy, awful seriousness unto which it composes and forms our spirits. Our humility, as it respects him, answers his high excellency; as it respects our own inferiors, his gracious condescension. How pleasant is it to fall before him! and how connatural and agreeable to a good spirit; to stoop low, upon any occasion, to do good! Sincerity is a most God-like excellency; an imitation of his truth, as grounded in his all-sufficiency; which sets him above the necessity or possibility of any advantage by collusion or deceit; and

corresponds to his omniscieny and heart-searching eye. It heightens a man's spirit to a holy and generous boldness; makes him apprehend it beneath him to do an unworthy, dishonest action, that should need a palliation, or a concealment;\* and gives him the continual pleasure of self-approbation to God, whom he chiefly studies and desires to please. Patience, a prime glory of the divine majesty, continues a man's possession of his own soul, his liberty, his dominion of himself. He is, if he can suffer nothing, a slave to his vilest and most sordid passions at home, his own base fear, and brutish anger, and effeminate grief, and to any man's lusts and humours besides, that he apprehends can do him hurt. It keeps a man's soul in a peaceful calm, delivers him from that most unnatural self-torment, defeats the impotent malice of his most implacable enemy, who fain would vex him, but cannot. Justice, the great attribute of the Judge of all the earth, as such, so far as the impression of it takes place among men, preserves the common peace of the world, and the private peace of each man in his own bosom, so that the former be not disturbed by doing of mutual injuries, nor the latter by the conscience of having done them. The brotherly love of fellow-Christians, the impression of that special love which God bears to them all, admits them into one another's bosoms, and to all the endearments and pleasures of a mutual communion. Love to enemies, the express image of our heavenly Father, by which we appear his children, begotten of him, overcomes evil by goodness, blunts the double edge of revenge, at least the sharper edge, (which is always towards the author of it,) secures ourselves from wounding impressions and resentments, turns keen anger into gentle pity, and substitutes mild pleasant forgiveness in the room of the much uneasier thoughts and study of retaliation. Mercifulness towards the distressed, as our Father in heaven is merciful, heaps blessing upon our souls, and evidences our title to what we are to live by, the divine mercy. A universal benignity and

propensity to do good to all, an imitation of the immense diffusive goodness of God, is but kindness to ourselves, rewards itself by that greater pleasure is in giving than in receiving, and associates us with God, (in the blessedness of this work, as well as in the disposition to it,) who exercises loving kindness in the earth, because he delighteth therein.

Here are some of the *μύηματα τῆς θείας ζωῆς*, or *the things wherein consists that our conformity to the divine nature and will, which is proper to our present state*. And now, who can estimate the blessedness of such a soul? Can, in a word, the state of that soul be unhappy, that is full of the Holy Ghost, full of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, those blessed fruits of that blessed Spirit? Blessedness is connaturalised unto this soul: every thing doth its part, and all conspire to make it happy. This soul is a temple, an habitation of holiness. Here dwells a deity in his glory. It is a paradise, a garden of God. Here he walks and converses daily, delighted with its fragrant fruitfulness. He that hath those things and aboundeth, is not barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus: he is the sun, and the knowledge of of him, the quickening beams that cherish and ripen these fruits. But the soul that lacketh these things is a desert, a habitation of devils. Here is stupid, disconsolate infidelity, inflexible obstinacy, and resolvedness for hell, hatred and contempt of the Sovereign Majesty; who yet, its secret misgiving thoughts tell it, will be too hard for it at last. Here is swollen pride and giddy vain-glory, disguised hypocrisy and pining envy, raging wrath and ravenous avarice, with what you can imagine besides, leading to misery and desolation.

REV. JOHN HOWE.

*Our greatest Self-interest is to follow after Holiness.*

*As love to God, so a regular self-love will much help and further our obedience and duty.* And then is self-love truly regular, when men love their own souls as God loves them. Now God's love to the souls of men is such, that though *He wills all men to be saved*, yet he wills that none

\* As that noble Roman, whom his architect, about to build him a house, promised to contrive it free from all his neighbours' inspection; he replies, Nay, if thou have any art in thee, build my house so that all may see what I do,—*Yell. Pat.* p. 82.

shall be saved, *but through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth*. And whilst we love ourselves, if we observe the same method and order, this self-love is always commendable and necessary. Desires after eternal happiness and salvation are natural to that soul that is truly conscious of its own immortality, and eternal unalterable state and condition; and when these desires are directed to future happiness through present holiness, then are they regular and become gracious. We are not so straitly limited by God's sovereignty over us, but while we fix one eye upon our work we may fix the other on our reward: God is not so strict in his prerogative over us, as to require service from us from what we have already received from him: he is not as a cruel lord and master to say, Obey me, though afterwards you perish; see to it that you love and glorify me, though I eternally punish you; though, considering that infinite distance we stand at from God, we could object nothing against the equity of his proceedings. No; but God hath so graciously twisted his glory and our duty together, that while we promote the one we do also promote the other, and while we work for God we do but work for ourselves. Now are there any that need to be persuaded to love themselves? Is it not the great and general sin, that all men love and seek themselves? And do not men, by becoming self-lovers, become self-destroyers? Yes, they do so; but it is because they seek themselves out of God's way, that therefore they lose themselves for ever. Religion and holiness are not such severe things, as to exclude self-love; nay, right self-love is that which is no where to be found separate from true grace. Ministers call upon men to exercise self-denial and self-abhorrence; and this the foolish world mistakes as if so be they exhorted them to divorce themselves from themselves, to lay aside all respect and consideration of self, and to offer violence to the most common principles of self-preservation. No; would to God we all sought ourselves more earnestly and constantly than we do, and that we all knew wherein our greatest interest and concernment did lie: then should we not leave our great work undone, nor gratify the sloth of our corrupt humours, and the sinful propensions of our carnal part; nor should we think what we do for sin and

Satan, we do for ourselves; no, all this is to hate ourselves. And wicked men at the last day shall know, they have been their own most bitter and most implacable enemies, that they would not be content with any thing less than their own eternal ruin. A true Christian is the only selfish man in the world; all others, they are not self-lovers but self-destroyers. What shall I say more than this? The Apostle asks, *Did ever any man hate his own flesh?* Did ever any man delight to gash and burn, to wrack and torture himself? Truly I may ask the quite contrary. Do almost any love their own spirits, their spiritual part, their souls? This they wound and gash by many a bloody sin; this they burn and sear by hardness and impenitency; this they go about to torture and torment in hell for ever. Oh therefore be persuaded at length to take pity on yourselves, considering you are but destroying, while you think you are embracing of yourselves; and that will be found but self-murder at last, which you now call self-love.

BR. HOPKINS.

#### *The Joy and Consolation of Religion.*

THE peace which a religious soul is possessed of, is such a *peace as passeth all understanding*: the joy that it meets with in the ways of holiness, is *unspeakable and full of glory*. The delights and sweetnesses that accompany a religious life are of a purer and more excellent nature than the pleasures of worldly men. The spirit of a good man is a more pure and refined thing than to delight itself in the thick mire of earthly and sensual pleasures, in which carnal men roll and tumble themselves with so much greediness: *Non admittit ad volatum accipitrem suum in terra pulverulenta*, as the Arabic proverb hath it. It speaks the degeneration of any soul whatsoever, that it should desire to incorporate itself with any of the gross, dreggy, sensual delights here below. But a soul purified by religion from all earthly dregs, delights to mingle itself only with things that are most divine and spiritual. There is nothing that can beget any pleasure or sweetness, but in some harmonical faculty which hath some kindred and acquaintance with it. As it is in the senses, so in every other faculty, there is such a natural kind of science as whereby it can



single out its own proper object from every thing else, and is better able to define it to itself than the exactest artist in the world can; and when once it hath found it out, it presently feels itself so perfectly fitted and matched by it, that it dissolves into secret joy and pleasure in the entertainment of it. True delight and joy is begotten by the conjunction of some discerning faculty with its proper object. The proper objects for a mind and spirit are divine and immaterial things, with which it hath the greatest affinity, and therefore triumphs most in its converse with them; as it is well observed by Seneca,\* *Hoc habet argumentum divinitatis suæ, quod illum divina delectant; nec ut alienis interest, sed ut suis*: and when it converseth most with these high and noble objects, it behaves itself most gracefully, and lives most becoming itself; and it lives also most deliciously, nor can it any where else be better provided for, or indeed fare so well. A good man disdains to be beholden to the wit, or art, or industry of any creature to find him out, and bring him in a constant revenue and maintenance for his joy and pleasure: the language of his heart is that of the Psalmist, *Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me*, Psal. iv. 6. Religion always carries a sufficient provision of joy and sweetness along with it to maintain itself withal: *All the ways of wisdom are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 17. Religion is no sullen stoicism or oppressing melancholy, it is no intrinsically tyrannical exercise over those noble and vivacious affections of love and delight, as those men that were never acquainted with the life of it may imagine; but is full of a vigorous and masculine delight and joy, and such as advanceth and ennobles the soul, and does not weaken or dispirit the life and power of it, as sensual and earthly joys do, when the soul, unacquainted with religion, is enforced to give entertainment to these gross and earthly things, for the want of enjoyment of some better good. The spirit of a good man may justly behave itself with a noble disdain to all terrene pleasures, because it knows where to mend its fare; it is the same almighty and eternal goodness which is the happiness of God and of all good men. The truly religious soul affects nothing primarily and

fundamentally but God himself; his contentment, even in the midst of his worldly employments, is in the sun of the divine favour that shines upon him: this is as the manna that lies upon the top of all outward blessings, which his spirit gathers up and feeds upon with delight. Religion consists not in a toilsome drudgery about some bodily exercises and external performances; nor is it only the spending of ourselves in such attendances upon God and services to him as are only accommodated to this life, though every employment for God is both amiable and honourable: but there is something of our religion that interests us in a present possession of that joy which is unspeakable and glorious; which leads us into the porch of heaven, and to the confines of eternity. It sometimes carries up the soul into a mount of transfiguration, or to the top of Pisgah, where it may take a prospect of the promised land; and gives it a map or scheme of its future inheritance: it gives it sometimes some anticipations of blessedness, some foretastes of those joys, those rivers of pleasure which run at God's right hand for evermore. . .

As there would need nothing else to deter and affright men from sin but its own ugliness and deformity, were it presented to a naked view and seen as it is; so nothing would more effectually commend religion to the minds of men, than the displaying and unfolding the excellencies of its nature, than the true native beauty and inward lustre of religion itself: οὐδ' ἑσπερος, οὐδ' ἑως οὐρανὸν θαυμαστός: neither the evening nor the morning star could so sensibly commend themselves to our bodily eyes, and delight them with their shining beauties, as true religion, which is an undefiled beam of the uncreated light, would to a mind capable of conversing with it. Religion, which is the true wisdom, is, as the author of the book of Wisdom speaks of wisdom, *a pure influence flowing from the glory of the Almighty, the brightness of the everlasting light, the unspotted mirror of the power of God, and the image of his goodness: she is more beautiful than the sun, and above all the order of stars; being compared with the light, she is found before it*, Wisd. vii. 25. &c.

Religion is no such austere, sour, and rigid thing, as to affright men away from it: no, but those that are acquainted with the power of it, find it to be altogether

\* In Præfat. ad Lib. I. Nat. Quest.

sweet and amiable. A holy soul sees so much of the glory of religion in the lively impressions which it bears upon itself, as both woos and wins it. We may truly say concerning religion to such souls, as St. Paul spake to the Corinthians:—Needs it any epistles of commendation to you? Needs it any thing to court your affections? *Ye are indeed its epistle, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God,* 2 Cor. iii. 2, 3.

Religion is not like the prophet's roll, sweet as honey, when it was in his mouth, but as bitter as gall in his belly. Religion is no sullen Stoicism, no sour Pharisaism; it does not consist in a few melancholy passions, in some dejected looks or depressions of mind: but it consists in freedom, love, peace, life, and power; the more it comes to be digested into our lives the more sweet and lovely we shall find it to be. Those spots and wrinkles which corrupt minds think they see in the face of religion, are indeed no where else but in their own deformed and mis-shapen apprehensions. It is no wonder when a defiled fancy comes to be the glass, if you have an unlovely reflection. Let us therefore labour to purge our own souls from all worldly pollutions; let us breathe after the aid and assistance of the Divine Spirit, that it may irradiate and enlighten our minds, that we may be able to see divine things in a divine light: let us endeavour to live more in a real practice of those rules of religious and holy living, commended to us by our ever-blessed Lord and Saviour: so we shall know religion better, and knowing it, love it, and loving it, be still more and more ambitiously pursuing after it, till we come to a full attainment of it, and therein of our own perfection and everlasting bliss. REV. J. SMITH.

The only placid and sound tranquillity, the only solid, firm, and perpetual security, is to be delivered from the tempests of this restless scene, to be stationed in the port of salvation; to lift up the eyes from earth to heaven, and to be admitted into the favour of the Lord. Such a man approaches, in his thoughts, near to his God, and justly glories, that whatever others deem sublime and great in human affairs, is absolutely beneath his notice. He, who is greater than the world, can desire nothing, can want nothing from the world. What an unshaken protection, what a

truly divine shelter, fraught with eternal good, it must be, to be loosed from the snares of an entangling world, to be purged from earthly dregs, and to be wafted into the light of immortal day! When we see what the insidious rage of a destructive enemy was plotting against us, certainly we must be the more compelled to love what we shall be, because we have now learned both to know and to condemn what we were. Nor is there, for this end, any need of price, of canvassing, or of manual labour. This complete dignity, or power of man, is not to be acquired by elaborate efforts. The gift of God is gratuitous and easy. As the sun shines freely, as the fountain rises, as the rain bedews, so the Celestial Spirit infuses himself. The soul looks up to heaven, and becomes conscious of its Author. It then begins actually to be what it believes itself to be. It is higher than the firmament, and sublimer than all earthly power. Only do you, whom the heavenly warfare hath marked for divine service, preserve untainted and sober your Christian course, by the virtues of religion. Let prayer or reading be your assiduous employment. Sometimes speak with God, at other times hear him speak to you. Let him instruct you by his precepts; let him regulate you. Whom he hath made rich, none shall make poor. There can be no penury with him whose heart has once been enriched with celestial bounty. Roofs arched with gold, and houses inlaid with marble, will be vile in your eyes, when you know that your own minds ought rather to be cultivated and adorned; that this house is more valuable, which the Lord has chosen to be his temple, in which the Holy Ghost has begun to dwell. Let us adorn this house with the paintings of innocence, let us illuminate it with the light of righteousness. This will never fall into ruin through the decays of age. Its ornaments shall never fade. Whatever is not genuine is precarious, and affords to the possessor no sure foundation. This remains in its culture perpetually vivid; in honour and in splendour, spotless and eternal. It can neither be abolished nor extinguished. Is it then capable of no alteration? Yes, it will receive a rich improvement at the resurrection of the body. CYPRIAN.

Believe me, I speak it deliberately and with full conviction, I have enjoyed

many of the comforts of life, none of which I wish to esteem lightly; often have I been charmed with the beauties of nature, and refreshed with her bountiful gifts: I have spent many an hour in sweet meditation, and in reading the most valuable productions of the wisest men: I have often been delighted with the conversation of ingenious, sensible, and exalted characters: my eyes have been powerfully attracted by the finest productions of human art, and my ears by enchanting melodies: I have found pleasure when calling into activity the powers of my own mind; when residing in my own native land, or travelling through foreign parts; when surrounded by large and splendid companies—still more, when moving in the small endearing circle of my own family: yet, to speak the truth before God, who is my Judge, I must confess I know not any joy that is so dear to me, that so fully satisfies the inmost desires of my mind, that so enlivens, refines, and elevates my whole nature, as that which I derive from religion, from faith in God; as one who not only is the Parent of men, but has condescended, as a brother, to clothe himself with our nature. Nothing affords me greater delight than a solid hope that I partake of his favours, and rely on his never-failing support and protection. . . He, who has been so often my hope, my refuge, my confidence, when I stood upon the brink of an abyss where I could not move one step forward; He, who in answer to my prayer, has helped me when every prospect of help vanished; that God who has safely conducted me, not merely through flowery paths, but likewise across precipices and burning sands; may this God be thy God, thy refuge, thy comfort, as he has been mine! Let the world laugh me to scorn, I rejoice in the God of my salvation! Let ignorance and infidelity mock, I enjoy that which the world cannot enjoy; I receive that which infidelity will never receive! I say, with St. Paul, *is he the God of the Jews only?* 'The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob only?' By no means!—Assuredly He is my God also. I say with Luther, 'If I have the faith of Abraham, I am Abraham.'

LAVATER.

*All the Christian's Joy and Consolation in Religion rest on his dependence on Christ.*

LET us act in a constant dependence upon Jesus Christ. Religion would be

much more pleasant, if we did but cleave more closely to Christ in it, and do all in his name. The more precious Christ is to us, the more pleasant will every part of our work be; and therefore believing in Christ is often expressed by our rejoicing in him. We may rejoice in God, through Christ, as the Mediator between us and God; may rejoice in our communion with God, when it is kept up through Christ; may rejoice in hope of eternal life, when we see this life in the Son. *He that hath the Son of God, has life, that is, he has comfort.*

There is that in Christ, and in his undertaking and performances for us, which is sufficient to satisfy all our doubts, to silence all our fears, and to balance all our sorrows. He was appointed to be *the Consolation of Israel*, and he will be so to us, when we have learnt not to look for that in ourselves, which is to be had in him only, and to make use of his mediation in every thing wherein we have to do with God. When we rejoice in the righteousness of Christ, and in his grace and strength; when we rejoice in his satisfaction and intercession, in his dominion and universal agency and influence, and in the progress of his Gospel, and the conversion of souls to him, and please ourselves with prospects of his second coming, we have then a joy, not only which no man takes from us, but which will increase more and more: and of the *increase of Christ's government*, and therefore of that peace, *there shall be no end*. Our songs of joy are then most pleasant, when the burden of them is, *None but Christ, none but Christ*. . . .

Come then, my soul, come thou and all thy concerns into this ark, and there thou shalt be safe when the deluge comes. Flee to this city of refuge, and in it thou shalt be secured from the avenger of blood. Quit all other shelters, for every thing but Christ is a refuge of lies, which the hail will sweep away. There is not salvation in any other but in him: trust him for it therefore, and depend upon him only. Here I cast anchor, here I rest my soul, *it is Christ that died, yea, rather, is risen again*, and is and will be the *Author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him*. To him I entirely give up myself—to be ruled, and taught, and saved by him, and in him I have a full satisfaction. I will draw near to God for mercy and grace, in

a dependence upon him as my righteousness. I will go forth, and go on in the way of my duty, in a dependence upon him as my strength. I will shortly venture into the invisible, unchangeable world, in a dependence upon him as the Captain of my salvation, who is able to bring many sons to glory, and as willing as he is able. *Lord, I believe ; help thou my unbelief.*

Having thus committed thyself, my soul, to the Lord Jesus, comfort thyself in him ; please thyself with the thought of having disposed of thyself so well, and of having lodged the great concern of thy salvation in so good a hand ; now *return to thy rest, O my soul*, and be easy. Having made sure of thy interest in Christ, live in a continual dependence upon him ; and being satisfied of his love, be satisfied with it : thou hast enough, and needest no more. MATT. HENRY.

*Christ the only true Riches.*

IF I have Jesus, I have all my soul can want. He can bless me, and make me truly happy ; and, clothed with his righteousness, I shall be honourable and beloved of God : He can secure and defend me from every evil, make all things in friendship with me, and fully satisfy the desires of an immortal soul, without any deficiency or failure through time and through all eternity. It is only the ignorance and the carnality of man that prevent his valuing the Lord Jesus Christ, his grace, and his blessings ; for while sin is in the heart, while the mind in its carnal state is formed to relish only earthly things and sensual objects, there can be no apprehension of the nature and excellency of spiritual things, and consequently no value for the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the glory of the spiritual world. It is therefore the great aim of the enemy of souls to engage the attention of the natural man to the things of time, and to the various objects of sense which surround him, and to lead him to estimate them so highly, and, alas ! so falsely, as to place all his happiness in the enjoyment of them. Hence, amongst these things which are lost—i. e. among the perishing things of earth—the god of this world blinds the eyes of them that believe not, *lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4. Thus

deceived as to their true state, ignorant of their real wants, and mistaken as to their true enjoyment, the world at large are careless of Christ and unconcerned as to the possession of him and his salvation. But, while the sensual world, deluded with imaginary bliss, pity and despise those who value Christ, they are themselves truly the objects of pity, since they are ignorant of the only Saviour and only blessing of the human race. The humble believer compassionates the miserable fallacy that deceives their mind, and confirms them in errors so fatal to the happiness of an immortal soul, and so dangerous to their eternal welfare ; and, with the kindness and philanthropy which conforms him to his benevolent Master, earnestly supplicates the Spirit of the Lord to enlighten their understanding, and lead them to the knowledge of that only good thing for the sons of men. The richest man on earth soon finds that there are several things which all his wealth cannot procure, and without which he has no power of enjoyment. It can give him neither health of body nor peace of mind, nor restore them when they are declining. It fails to help in matters of the greatest importance, and especially at the time when help is most needed. Go, ask through all the world, amidst the various things which the stores of gold can procure, where is the place of happiness ? And each will answer for itself, *It is not in me. It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof, &c.*, Job xxviii. 12—28. But what gold cannot purchase, the Lord Jesus Christ can bestow ; even that without which we must be poor indeed. Riches can procure food and raiment, and the luxuries of each. They can supply all bodily conveniences and comforts. They can secure our temporal possessions, and adorn our temporary habitations. They can do still more ; they can, in ordinary cases, conciliate the favour, the esteem, and the respect of men ; and, by rewarding, can retain their homage and their services to administer to our wants and our gratifications. But in the most important seasons of trial, affliction, or necessity, they can afford no aid, no support, no consolation. But here is the peculiar excellency of the Friend of sinners, and of the blessings which he bestows : they are suited to the seasons of trial, to support, and to carry through all ; yea, to

turn all into blessings. The peculiar benefits which he bestows are of a nature suited to the power and the duration of an immortal spirit, being spiritual and eternal. He can give me the pardon of all my sins, peace with God through the justification and acceptance of my person, the consciousness of Divine love and favour, the joys and consolation of his Spirit, the calm of soul in the season of trial and affliction, the hope of everlasting glory that can sustain even in the hour of nature's dissolution, and the satisfactory assurance of an unalienable title to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. These are true riches which never fade and never fail; riches which can never lose their value, and of which the true believer shall never lose the enjoyment. In comparison with these, how do all earthly things, in their highest glories, fade and vanish away before the eye of faith? Hence we see that the poor and humble believer is often happier than the richest of the sons of men; for he has joys and pleasures, and an unfailing source for their supply, which the world knows nothing of; a source undefiled with sin, which supplies him with gratifications free from guilty fears and gloomy apprehensions, and which do not terminate with the present system of things, but are suited to that glorious system which shall be the felicity of eternal ages, into which he is speedily advancing, and where they shall be perfectly matured. *The first blessing of pardoning mercy and justifying righteousness, which the Lord Jesus Christ bestows, opens the way to all besides, Rom. v. 1, &c. So that all things are theirs who can say Christ is theirs, 1 Cor. iii. 21.* Sense values earthly blessings, because they are present, and suited to the gratification of the body; the instrument through which alone, in the present state, the immortal soul can act or enjoy. But spiritual blessings, though unseen, are infinitely preferable in just estimation; and when faith beholds them (and it is the great work of the believer to live by faith, and not by sense), they appear so to the believing mind. But these are all treasured up in Christ Jesus, that they may be given to the believing sinner, and are secured to the enjoyment of faith, by the precious and never-failing promises of his word. Whatever, then, we may be destitute of, let us seek to have an interest in Christ,

nor ever be satisfied without the knowledge of its attainment. The Apostle surely was not mistaken in the sentiment which he entertained of the incomparable value of the Saviour, when he accounted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; nor was he unwise in his determination when he resolved to suffer the loss of all things, that he might win Christ, and be found in him. REV. W. GOODE.

*Nothing but Christ can satisfy the restless desires of Man.*

SUCH is the present state of the world, that men perceive a need of something, which, if they really knew the situation in which they are placed, they would find to be—the Lord Jesus. Man feels his wants: he is,—he must be,—a needy, because he is a dependent, creature. But when he looks around him, though at first elevated with hope, and big with expectations, he finds nothing here suited to his whole nature. Wherever he fixes his confidence, he is soon convinced it is not what he expected it to be. All that offers itself for his enjoyment soon discovers its vanity and emptiness, and fails to afford him the satisfaction he looked for in it. Still there is a something which he needs. And, when he has run all the circle of earthly pleasures, or attained all that earth can give, there is yet that something wanting. The general experience of mankind concurs with that of the royal Preacher, who, in possession of more than any one ever attained beside of wisdom or prosperity, pronounced the sum of all, *vanity and vexation of spirit.*

Hence, while feeling the vacuity which remains, even when in possession of all the good which earth can yield, man must actually desire and long for something beyond, which can only be found in Christ. The grand pursuit of man is happiness. In whatever way he wanders, whatever are his pursuits or occupations, however mistaken in the means, this is his object and his end. But does he acquire it? Alas! what frequent, what continual disappointment! To obtain this he must have objects to enjoy, in which all his wishes can meet, all his powers can be exercised, all his desires can centre, and all his passions (such indeed as he received them from the hand of his Creator, and not as distorted by sin) can find com-

plete satisfaction. But these are not to be found on earth. To obtain any one of those important ends, how many schemes does he devise! how many plans does he execute! He turns from one pursuit to another, changes again, and shifts the scene, and still finds himself no nearer the great object of man's desire. Hence arises the restlessness of human nature. Dissatisfied with his present situation and the present state of things, man is anxious for something new; waiting continually for some change that may, as he supposes, render his situation better, promote his happiness, or supply that emptiness in his soul which all his present possessions have still left behind. But, while he feels the insufficiency of earth, his depravity blinds him to his true state and his real interest. He knows not, and is unwilling to know, where the fault lies: he is pleased with the chain of his passions which binds him to earth, and, filled with illusive dreams of happiness, which ever flies from him as he attempts to embrace it, he hopes to remedy his misery by rushing further into that which is the real cause of it. He has a secret conviction that he is not where, and what, he ought to be; and that every thing around him is not that to him for which it was designed: but, alas! he knows not that all this arises from his distance from God; that it is the necessary consequence of his being found a sinner against his Creator; that he has fixed a dissatisfaction in all earthly enjoyments, embittered them with guilty fear, and clouded them with gloomy suspicions; that it has stamped an emptiness on all earthly glory; and that man, having wandered from the true source of perfection and bliss, only rests on other things to be disappointed. Hence, the uncertainty of earth, even in its best estate. Man must have a higher good, or be eternally miserable. He must be restored to the Divine favour, and rest again in the love and enjoyment of his God, or for ever wander amidst hopeless vanities. But for these things where shall he look? Oh, behold, thou who art guilty and miserable, thy help, thy refuge! It is placed in Jesus the friend of sinners! He is the tree which can sweeten the bitter waters of life (see Exod. xv. 23—26), and render them pleasant and salutary. He is the refuge where all the desires of men may

safely rest, nor fear insufficiency or disappointment. . . .

Why so infatuated, thou perishing sinner, as to neglect this glorious Saviour, when all his majesty and mercy are so repeatedly displayed before thee, and thyself repeatedly solicited to become the happy partaker of his benefits? Why is the sacred word which conveys the descriptions of his excellencies so totally disregarded? Why are its convincing evidences, so graciously afforded by a God of mercy, so partially examined, so unwillingly admitted, or heedlessly passed by? Why that secret or allowed unbelief, in opposition to the clearest discoveries of truth? Why dost thou continue to deceive thyself with the hopes of empty vanities; and, when experience teaches thee the impossibility of finding happiness on earth, dost thou still renew the vain pursuit, incredulous to the testimony of Divine truth, though so correspondent with the facts which press on thy observation all around thee? How unreasonable, at least, not to try the experiment, to find that happiness in Jesus which experience teaches thee is not to be found on earth! How absurd to trifle when eternity is depending! If it is neglected till the great decisive day, you will then, alas! find it too late;—too late you will feel the necessary conviction, when lost, lost eternally, lost beyond the remedy which once the Gospel offered; though then fully convinced of that which you could not believe on the testimony of God, that to have an interest in Christ can alone secure and bless an immortal soul. O Spirit of Jesus, by thy grace enlighten the mind, and inflame the heart, that, convinced in time, while the blessings of salvation are before them, men may seek and find in that adorable Redeemer that which is the light and life and glory of an immortal soul.

REV. W. GOODE.

*We must learn to look for Happiness in God alone.*

CERTAINLY the greatest, the noblest pleasure of intelligent creatures must result from their acquaintance with the blessed God, and with their own rational and immortal souls. And oh, how divinely pleasant and entertaining is it to look into our own souls, when we can find all our powers and passions united and engaged

in pursuit after God, our whole souls longing and passionately breathing after a conformity to him, and the full enjoyment of him! Verily, no hours pass away with so much divine pleasure, as those that are spent in communing with God and our own hearts. How sweet is a spirit of devotion, of seriousness and solemnity; a spirit of Gospel simplicity, love, and tenderness! Oh how desirable and profitable is a spirit of holy watchfulness, and godly jealousy over ourselves; when our souls are afraid of nothing so much as that we shall grieve and offend the blessed God, whom at such times we apprehend, or at least hope, to be a father and friend; whom we then love and long to please, rather than to be happy ourselves, or at least we delight to derive our happiness from pleasing and glorifying him. Surely this is a pious temper, worthy of the highest ambition and closest pursuit of intelligent creatures. Oh how vastly superior is the pleasure, peace, and satisfaction derived from these divine frames, to that which we sometimes seek in things impertinent and trifling! Bitter experience teaches us that *in the midst of such laughter the heart is sorrowful*, and there is no true satisfaction but in God. But, alas, how shall we obtain and preserve this spirit of religion and devotion? Let us follow the Apostle's direction, Phil. ii. 12, and labour upon the encouragement he there mentions, ver. 13, for it is God only can afford us this favour; and he will be sought to, and it is fit we should wait upon him for so rich a mercy. May the God of all grace afford us the influences of his Holy Spirit, and help us, that we may from our hearts esteem it our greatest liberty and happiness, that *whether we live, we may live to the Lord, or whether we die, we may die to the Lord*; that in life and death we may be his.

BRAINERD.

It requires long and severe conflicts to subdue the earthly and selfish nature, and turn all the desire of the soul to God. He that trusts to his own wisdom and strength, is easily seduced to seek repose in human consolations: but he that truly loves Christ, and depends only upon his redeeming power within him, as the principle of holiness and truth, turns not aside to such vain comforts, nor, indeed, seeks after any of the delights of sense; but rather chooses the severe exercises of self-denial, and, for

the sake of Christ, to endure the most painful labours.

When, therefore, God bestows upon thee the consolations of the Spirit, receive them with all thankfulness: but remember, they are his gift, not thy desert; and instead of being elate, careless, and presuming, be more humble, more watchful and devout in all thy conduct: for the hour of light and peace will soon pass away, and darkness and temptation will succeed. Yet when this awful change intervenes, do not immediately despair, but with humility and patience wait for the return of the heavenly visitation; for God, who is infinite in goodness as well as in power, is both able and willing to renew the bounties of his grace in more abundant measures.

This vicissitude of day and night in the spiritual life, is neither new nor unexpected to those that are acquainted with the ways of God; for the ancient prophets and most eminent saints have all experienced an alternative of visitation and desertion. As an instance of this, the royal Prophet thus describes his own case, *When I was in prosperity*, says he, and my heart was filled with the treasures of grace, *I said, I shall never be moved*. But these treasures being soon taken away, and feeling in himself the poverty of fallen nature, he adds, *Thou didst turn thy face from me, and I was troubled*. Yet in this disconsolate state he does not despair; but with more ardour raises his desire and prayer to God: *Unto thee, O Lord, will I cry, and I will make my supplication unto my God*. He then testifies that his prayer is accepted, and his prosperous state restored: *The Lord hath heard me, and hath had mercy upon me: the Lord is become my helper*. And to shew how this mercy and help were manifested, he adds: *Thou hast turned my mourning into joy, and hast compassed me about with gladness*. And if this interchange of light and darkness, joy and sorrow, was the common state of the greatest saints; surely such poor and infirm creatures as we are, ought not to despair, when we are sometimes elevated by fervour, and sometimes depressed by coldness; for the Holy Spirit cometh and goeth, *according to the good pleasure of his will*: and upon this principle the blessed Job saith, *Thou visitest man in the morning, and of a sudden thou provest him*.

In what, therefore, can I hope, or where

ought I to place my confidence, but in infinite goodness, and the life, light, and peace of the Divine Spirit? For whether the conversation of holy men, the endearing kindness of faithful friends, the melody of music in psalms and hymns, the entertainment of ingenious books, nay, the instructions of the oracles of God—whether any or all of these advantages are present, what do they all avail, what joy can they dispense, when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from my soul, and I am left to the poverty and wretchedness of my fallen self? In such a state, no remedy remains but meek and humble patience, and the total surrender of my will to the blessed will of God. THOMAS A KEMPIS.

*Happiness resulting from eyeing God in all things.*

To eye God in all our comforts, and observe the smiling aspects of his face, when he dispenses them to us; to eye him in all our afflictions, and consider the paternal wisdom that instructs us in them; how would this increase our mercies, and mitigate our troubles? To eye him in all his creatures, and observe the various prints of the Creator's glory stamped upon them; with how lively a lustre would it clothe the world, and make every thing look with a pleasant face! What a heaven were it to look upon God, as filling all in all! and how sweetly would it, ~~eye~~ while, raise our souls into some such sweet ~~seraphic~~ strains, as, *Holy, holy, holy, the whole earth is full of his glory*, Isa. vi. 2, 3. To eye him in his providences, and consider how all events are, with infinite wisdom, disposed into an apt subserviency to his holy will and ends:—what difficulties would hence be solved! what seeming inconsistencies reconciled! and how much would it contribute to the ease and quiet of our minds! To eye him in his Christ, the express image of his person, the brightness of his glory; and in the Christian economy, the Gospel revelation and ordinances, through which he manifests himself: to behold him in the posture wherein he saves souls, clad with the garments of salvation, girt with power, and apparelled with love, travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save: to view him addressing himself to allure and win to him the hearts of sinners, when

he discovers himself in Christ, upon that reconciling design, makes grace that brings salvation appear, teaching to deny ungodliness, &c.: to behold him entering into human flesh, pitching his tabernacle among men, hanging out his ensigns of peace, laying his trains, spreading his net, the cords of a man, the bands of love: to see him in his Christ, ascending the cross, lifted up to draw all men to him; and consider that mighty love of justice and of souls, both so eminently conspicuous in that stupendous sacrifice; here to fix our eyes looking to Jesus, and behold in him, him whom we have pierced: to see his power and glory, as they were wont to be seen in his sanctuaries; to observe him in the solemnities of his worship, and the graceful postures wherein he holds communion with his saints, when he seats himself amidst them on the throne of grace, receives their addresses, dispenses the tokens and pledges of his love: into what transports might these visions put us every day!

Let us then stir up our drowsy souls, open our heavy eyes, and turn them upon God, inure and habituate them to a constant view of his (yet veiled) face, that we may not see him only by casual glances, but as those that seek his face, and make it our business to gain a thorough knowledge of him. But let us remember, that all our present visions of God must aim at a further conformity to him: they must design imitation, not the satisfying of curiosity; our looking must not therefore be an inquisitive, busy prying into the unrevealed things of God. Carefully abstain from such over-bold presumptuous looks. But remember, we are to eye God as our pattern. Wherein he is to be so, he hath plainly enough revealed and proposed himself to us. And consider, this is the pattern, both to which we ought, and to which we shall be conformed, if we make it our business; so will sense of duty and hope of success concur to fix our eye and keep it steady. Especially, let us endeavour to manage and guide our eye aright, in beholding him, that our sight of him may most effectually subserve this design of being like him: and herein nothing will be more conducive, than that our looks be qualified with reverence, and love.

REV. J. HOWE.



## SECTION IV.—ON THE CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

*The Character of a Christian.*

IT is true, that worldly eyes can see no difference betwixt a Christian and another man; the outside of both is made of one clay, and cast in one mould; both are inspired with one common breath: outward events distinguish them not; those God never made for evidences of love or hatred. So the senses can perceive no difference betwixt the reasonable soul, and that which informs the beast; yet the soul knows there is much more than betwixt their bodies. The same holds in this: Faith sees more inward difference than the eye sees outward resemblance. This point is not more high than material: which that it may appear, let me shew what it is to be a Christian: you that have felt it, can second me with your experience; and supply the defects of my discourse. He is the living temple of the living God, where the Deity is both resident and worshipped. The highest thing in a man is his own spirit; but in a Christian the Spirit of God, which is the God of spirits. No grace is wanting in him; and those which there are, want not stirring up. Both his heart and his hands are clean: all his outward purity flows *from within*; neither doth he frame his soul to counterfeit good actions; but out of his holy disposition commands and produces them in the light of God. Let us begin with his beginning, and fetch the Christian out of this nature, as another Abraham from his Chaldea; while the worldling lives in nature, out of God. The true convert therefore, after his wild and secure courses, puts himself through the motions of God's Spirit to school unto the law; there he learns what he should have done, what he could not do, what he hath done, what he hath deserved. These lessons cost him many a stripe, and many a tear, and not more grief than terror: for this sharp master makes him feel what sin is, and what hell is, and, in regard of both, what himself is. When he hath well smarted under the whip of this severe usher, and is made vile enough in himself, then is he led up to the higher school of Christ, and there taught the comfortable lessons of grace; there he learns what belongs to a Saviour, what

one he is, what he hath done, and for whom; how he became ours, we his; and now finding himself in a true state of danger, of humility, of need, of desire, of fitness for Christ, he brings home to himself all that he learns; and what he knows, he applies. His former tutor he feared, this he loveth: that shewed him his wounds, yea, made them; this binds and heals them: that killed him; this shews him life, and leads him to it. Now at once he hates himself, defies Satan, trusts to Christ, makes account both of pardon and glory. This is his most precious faith, whereby he appropriates, yea ingrosses Christ Jesus to himself: whence he is justified from his sins, purified from his corruptions, established in his resolutions, comforted in his doubts, defended against temptations, overcomes all his enemies. Which virtue, as it is most employed, and most opposed, so carries the most care from the Christian heart, that it be sound, lively, growing: sound, not rotten, not hollow, not presumptuous: sound in the act; not superficial conceit, but a true, deep, and sensible apprehension: an apprehension, not of the brain, but of the heart; and of the heart, not approving, or assenting, but trusting and reposing. Sound in the object, not but Christ: he knows, that no friend in heaven can do him good, without this: the angels cannot; God will not: *Ye believe in the Father, believe also in me.*

Sound in the end; for it cannot give life, unless it give life: the faith that is not faithful, is dead: the fruits of faith are good works; whether inward, within the roof of the heart, as love, awe, sorrow, piety, zeal, joy, and the rest; or outward towards God, or our brethren: obedience and service to the one; to the other relief and beneficence:—these he bears in his time; sometimes all, but always some.

Growing: true faith cannot stand still; but as it is fruitful in works, so it increaseth in degrees: from a little seed it proves a large plant, reaching from earth to heaven, and from one heaven to another: every shower and every sun adds something to it. Neither is this grace ever solitary, but always attended royally: for he that believes what a Saviour he

hath, cannot but love him; and he that loves him, cannot but hate whatsoever may displease him; cannot but rejoice in him, and hope to enjoy him, and desire to enjoy his hope, and condemn all those vanities which he once desired and enjoyed. His mind now scorneth to grovel upon earth, but soareth up to the things above, where Christ sits at the right hand of God; and after it hath seen what is done in heaven, looks strangely upon all worldly things. He dare trust his faith above his reason and sense, and hath learned to wean his appetite from craving much. He stands in awe of his own conscience, and dare no more offend it, than not displease himself. He fears not his enemies, yet neglects them not; equally avoiding security, and timorousness. He sees him that is invisible; and walks with him awfully, yet familiarly. He knows what he is born to, and therefore digests the miseries of his wardship, with patience: he finds more comfort in his afflictions, than any worldling in pleasures. And as he hath these graces to comfort him within, so hath he the angels to attend him without; spirits better than his own; more powerful, more glorious. These bear him in their arms, wake by his bed, keep his soul while he hath it, and receive it when it leaves him. These are some present differences: the greatest are future; which could not be so great, if themselves were not witness; no less than betwixt heaven and hell, torment and glory, an incorruptible crown, and a fire unquenchable. Whether infidels believe these things or no, we know them shall they, but too late. What remaineth but that we applaud ourselves in this happiness, and walk on cheerily in this heavenly profession? acknowledging that God could not do more for us, and that we cannot do enough for him. Let others boast of ancient and noble houses, large patrimonies, or dowries, honourable commands; others of famous names, high and envied honours; or the favours of the greatest; others of valour or beauty, or some perhaps of eminent learning and wit; it shall be our pride that we are Christians.

BP. HALL.

If one were to draw the portraiture of a Christian, this probably would come near to his description:—He is one who, in doctrine, believes that the three persons in Jehovah are equally engaged in the ac-

complishment of his salvation; that the love of Father, Son, and Spirit, is but one love, directed to the three objects of their respective offices for him,—namely, creation, redemption, and regeneration, terminating in his eternal glorification; that he was chosen freely to this mercy, when it was lost by Adam to his nature; that he is freely called by the effectual application of divine power; that he is justified, only, and entirely, and at once, by the obedience of Jehovah, in human flesh, to that perfect law, which man was created to obey, but had broken; that he is sanctified in Jesus Christ through the Spirit; and by him shall persevere to the end, and be everlastingly saved.—The Christian is one who, in experience, looks into himself only for humiliation, and out of himself to God in Christ for all his happiness. He perceives, and often very wofully, that he has not the power of thinking, saying, or doing, one good thing; and that, however specious many moral acts may appear to the world, there is nothing intrinsically holy, but what is brought into him, and maintained in him, by the agency of the Holy One. Body, soul, and spirit, therefore, he meekly surrenders to his God, for time and for eternity. He distrusts his own wisdom and will, in all cases, from a just persuasion, that what is perverse in its own nature can only lead him astray. His whole security from falling, he founds upon his God; and, accordingly, he flies to him in all his temptations and distresses, great or small. He feels himself a poor, weak creature, that cannot stand a moment, and is, therefore, easy, but when he leans upon his Beloved. He is well acquainted with this truth, uttered by a good man, that ‘with God, the most of mosts (in opposition to himself) is less than nothing; but without him, the least of leasts is too great a burden.’—Fleming’s Script. Truth, p. 248. And he hath that joy and peace in his Saviour, which he knows the world can neither give nor take away from him. Advert to his manners and conversation. He attends the ordinances of the Gospel, because in them he finds refreshment and strength to his soul. He hears the word with solemnity, comes to hear it with seriousness, and departs with gravity: not glad, when service is performed, to commence busybody in other men’s matters—1 Pet. iv. 15.—or to enter into the

frothy discourse of idle tongues. Like Mary he wishes to treasure up the Gospel in his heart, without evaporating its sweet savour by the impertinence and dissipation of worldly things. Collected and retired in himself, he aims to be inoffensive to others. Without parade he is religious, and serious without either gloom or severity. Never wishing to be forward in disputes, he is ever desirous of supporting the truths of God, in a way that may please God. He seeks not to obtrude upon or assume over others; but, with modest cheerfulness, wishes to elevate religion in the eyes of men; bearing with *their* infirmities, from the deepest conviction of *his own*. Above all things, he delights in the company of Him, who speaks as none other can speak, and when he obtains this happiness, (to use an old paradox,) 'is never less alone, than when he is alone.' He is never satisfied 'to part with his private duty, till he has found communion with God in it; and, when he has found that, he perceives such a sweetness and savour in it, as to make it not easy for him to go forth again into the world.'—Against such an experience as this, which sees, and handles, and tastes of the Word of Life, there is no arguing. If a man should attempt to controvert this testimony, it would be worse than to deny the evidence of the natural senses; because it is founded upon the truth of God, which cannot deceive, and upon the power of God, *which worketh all in all.*\*

SERLE.

### *Distinguishing marks of a true Christian*

1. HE has a true knowledge of the glory and excellency of God, that he is most worthy to be loved and praised for his own divine perfections, Psalm cxlv. 3.
2. God is his portion, Psalm lxxiii. 26.

\* What Christian can refuse to join his wishes upon this subject with those of the devout Witsius? Or who can deserve the name of a Christian, who cannot taste the sweets of prayer, meditation, and retirement? 'There is nothing I so much desire in the world, as to pass all my time, even to my latest breath, in a total abstraction from all disputes, in a calm retreat from the hurry of the world and the deepest solitude, in holy prayers and devout meditations, in humble researches into the Book of God, and in secret communion with him; however obscure I might be in such a case, and however unknown (unless when religion should make it my duty to be otherwise) almost to my neighbours.'—Misc. vol. 1. p. 637.

And God's glory his great concern, Matt. vi. 22.

3. Holiness is his delight; nothing he so much longs for as to be holy, as God is holy, Phil. iii. 9—12.

4. Sin is his greatest enemy. This he hates for its own nature, for what it is in itself, being contrary to a holy God, Jer. ii. 1. Consequently, he hates all sin, Rom. vii. 24.—1 John, iii. 9.

5. The laws of God also are his delight, Psalm cxix. 97; Rom. vii. 22. These he observes, not out of constraint, from a servile fear of hell, but they are his choice, Psalm cxix. 30. The strict observance of them is not his bondage, but his greatest liberty, ver. 45. D. BRAINERD.

*The Christian character should be marked by every thing that is lovely.*

CHRISTIANITY is the most lovely of all religions. Wisdom, humility, peace, patience, meekness, moderation, and love, run through every part of the covenant of grace, like so many bright and beautiful colours joined together in the rainbow, that stretches its glory round the lower sky, and seals an ancient and everlasting peace between earth and heaven.

There is therefore the most sovereign and constraining obligation laid upon us Christians, to do all things that are lovely, that we may make our holy religion appear like itself, and cause Christianity to be beloved of men. Every Christian is in some degree intrusted with the honour of Christ, and with the credit and renown his Gospel. Let us be watchful then take all opportunities, and use all pious methods to make our hope appear glorious, to set the name of Christ in its own amiable light, and to *adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.*

How dishonourable and shameful a thing is it for a Christian to have an unlovely carriage, or to shew any thing in his conduct that is rough and forbidding! What a blemish does it cast upon the Gospel which he professes! Let us talk what we will of the sublimer glories of Christianity, and profess an acquaintance with the deepest mysteries,—yet, with all our flaming zeal for the faith, we may become scandals to the Gospel, if we abandon the practice of love. The world will judge of our religion by our temper and carriage.

We give occasion therefore to the world to upbraid us, *What do you more than others?* If we, who pretend to be Christians, who have professed the most lovely of all religions, are guilty of practices unworthy of that sacred name; when they see our carriage as bad as others, they will be ready to cry out, *What is your beloved more than another beloved?* What are your doctrines better than others, if your practice differs not from others? And are you willing it should be said of you, that you are the occasions of shame and scandal to the name and religion of Christ?

We should do all things that are amiable in the sight of men, that the Gospel may have the glory of it. Shall I say, 'The Gospel of Christ deserves it at our hands?' If the Gospel brings so rich a salvation to us, it is fitting we should bring a great deal of honour to it. How honourable is it to the Gospel of Christ, when persons of a rough, crabbed, sour temper, are converted by this Gospel, are become Christians indeed, and are made all over-amiable, and soft, and obliging in their deportments; when they carry it like new creatures, like persons that are changed indeed, that have much of the spirit of love in them, the temper of the Gospel, and the temper of heaven! It is this Gospel, as I have said before, that turns lions into lambs, and ravens into doves, the most savage creatures into meek and gentle.

While we are thus engaged in the practice of love, we have no need to abandon our zeal for the truth; but we should separate our divine zeal from all over-guilty passions, lest, instead of honouring God, we should destroy his children. The servant of the Lord may be bold and steadfast in the defence of the Gospel, but he must be gentle towards all men, ready to teach, and patient under injuries. He must not strive like a hero for victory; but, when any oppose themselves to the truth, *he must instruct them in meekness*, 2 Tim. ii. 25. While we are *peaceful and harmless*, we may be at the same time *prudent and wise*; our Lord Jesus has joined these two characters, Matt. x. 16. And it is a very lovely inscription for a disciple of Christ to wear in all his public and private conversation, *wise as serpents, and harmless as doves*. Thus we may guard ourselves from the malice of the world, while we attempt to win them by all the sacred

methods of humanity and divine goodness.  
DR. WATTS.

The Christian religion chiefly dwells on the mild and retiring virtues, in opposition to those which are of a more hardy and obtrusive character. She omits not, indeed, courage, vigour of resolution, eagerness of zeal, fortitude, perseverance, contempt of danger; but she dwells chiefly on lowliness, patience, silent and meek returns for ill-usage, gentleness, compassion, allowances for the prejudices and failings of others. It is a consequence of this, that she sounds her code on humility and self-denial, though she avoids moroseness, austerities, and whatever might verge towards melancholy and misanthropy. By laying man low, and giving him a just impression of his unworthiness before God and man, and then, by teaching him to *deny ungodliness and worldly lusts*, she fixes the only firm foundation of consistent morality, and especially of the milder virtues. But whilst all other religions, when they attempt this, fall into foolish and absurd injunctions, severities without reason, privations which vex without purifying man,—Christianity is as lovely as she is self-denying. She is friendly and tender-hearted, and full of the social and domestic affections and sympathies.

REV. D. WILSON.

*What the Conversation of a Christian should be.*

*Let your conversation be as it becometh the Gospel.* As the Gospel is a gospel of truth and faithfulness, of sincerity and plainness, so our conversation should be sincere and upright, without deceit or fraud. As the Gospel is a gospel of peace, so a Christian conversation is a quiet, calm, and peaceable conversation. Christians should be men of peace, peacemakers, peace-preservers, lovers of peace, and live in peace. The Gospel is a gospel of love and mercy, of grace and goodness; the badge and cognisance of Christ's disciples, the mark and brand of Christ's sheep, is *love unfeigned*: thus a Christian conversation is an amicable, loving, and charitable conversation. Again, the Gospel of Christ is a gospel of meekness and humility, and its chief lesson is humility: *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 29; and *be ye clothed*

with humility, 1 Pet. v. 5; therefore a Christian conversation should partake largely of this spirit of humility. In a word, the Gospel of Christ is a gospel of holiness and purity; a Christian conversation must be a pure, and holy, and spotless conversation; saints in profession, must be saints indeed. And there is a comeliness in a Christian conversation, both as to the inward and the outward man—*Walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ*, that is, answerable to the precepts and commands of the Gospel, answerable to the promises and encouragements of the Gospel, answerable to the helps and supplies of grace which the Gospel affords, answerable to that grand pattern of holiness which the Gospel sets before us, and answerable to that high and glorious hope which the Gospel raises us up to the joyful expectation of; this is to *walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ*.

BURKITT.

Much has been said, and much written, to promote pious discourse among Christians, but I fear to little purpose. We have all reason to lament it, that so much corrupt communication proceeds out of our mouths, and so little of that which is good, and to the use of edifying; which might either manifest grace in him who speaks, or minister grace to them who hear. *And shall vain words never have an end?* Job xvi. 3. *Shall we reason always with unprofitable talk, and with speeches wherewith we can do no good, but are in danger of doing hurt?* Job xv. 3. Shall we never learn the art of introducing and keeping up profitable discourse in our conversation with our friends, such as we may hear of with comfort in that day, when *by our words we must be justified, and by our words we must be condemned?* A visit thus improved will be fruit abounding to a good account. What knowest thou, but that thou mayest thus save a soul from death, eternal death, or at least further a soul toward life, eternal life? Thus we must confess Christ before men, as those who are not ashamed of him or of his words. Reproach for it we must not fear, but say, 'if this be to be vile, I will be yet more vile;' nay we need not fear it, for perhaps even of them whose reproach we fear, if we manage it with meekness and humility, and without affectation, we may be had in honour.

Serious godliness is an awful thing, and will command respect.

We grant that our discourses with our friends cannot be turned entirely into this channel; allowance must be made for a great deal of common talk; yet even upon that there should appear an air of religion and godliness. Though a foreigner may speak English, yet ordinarily we can discern by his pronunciation, that he is a foreigner; so, though a good Christian, who belongs to another world, while he is here cannot avoid speaking much of the things of this world, yet he ought to do it in such a manner, that those he converses with may take knowledge of him that he has been with Jesus, and may say unto him, 'Thou art a Christian, and thy speech betrays thee.'

If it appear that we make conscience of our words, and are afraid of offending with our lips; if in our tongue be the law of kindness; if we always speak of God and his providence with reverence and a holy awe, like the great Mr. Boyle, who in discourse was observed never to mention the name of God without a pause, leaving room for a pious thought; if we speak of common things after a godly sort, as those who accustom themselves to the language of Canaan, and not the language of Ashdod; God will hereby be honoured, our profession will be beautified, those we converse with will be edified and say that God is with us of a truth. Our speech, though it be not always of grace, should be always with grace, seasoned with it as with salt, which gives it its own relish and flavour. . . .

Christians, I am not persuading you to any thing that is rude or morose, or that looks like an affectation of singularity. Nor am I declaiming against the innocent diversions and entertainments of conversation, which make it pleasant to yourselves and your friends, and are a relief to the fatigue of business; but I am only to remind you that you be very careful not to lose your religion in them. Remember that you are Christians, and you must speak and act in every thing as becomes saints. Remember that you are hastening into eternity, the days of your probation will shortly be numbered and finished; you are therefore concerned to spend your time on earth as those who are candidates and probationers for heaven, so that you may not seem to come short. Converse

with this world of sense, as those who know they must shortly remove to the world of spirits; and let this thought give a check to every thing that is vain and frothy, and put you upon considering, seeing you look for such things, *what manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness.*

Lay before you the example of the Lord Jesus, and as he was, so let us be in this world; walking as he walked; let us make visits as he did, with a design to do good, according as the sphere of our activity is. His lips dropped as a honey-comb, and fed many; let ours do so too, as we are able. Wherever he was, still he was about his Father's business; and let us, though unworthy such an honour, still endeavour to be so employed. When he visited his friends, he sympathised with them in their griefs, comforted them under their afflictions, reprov'd them for what was amiss, and entertained them with edifying and instructive discourse, taking rise for it usually by an admirable yet imitable art from common occurrences; and these things are written for our learning. *Go thou and do likewise.* MATT. HENRY.

*The Christian is a man of Prayer.*

YEs, if the entire world, in the midst of which we live, be but one continued temptation; if all the situations in which we may be, and all the objects which us, seem united with our corrupt purpose of either weakening or seducing us; if riches corrupt, and exasperate; if prosperity exalt, and tion depress; if business prey upon, ease render effeminate; if the sciences inflate, and ignorance lead us into error if mutual intercourse trivially engage too much, and solitude leave us too much to ourselves; if pleasure seduce, and pious works excite our pride; if health arouse the passions, and sickness nourish either lukewarmness or murmurings; in a word, if, since the fall of nature, every thing in, or around us, be a fresh danger to be dreaded; in a situation so deplorable, what hope of salvation, O, my God! could there be still remaining to man, if, from the bottom of this wretchedness, he had it not in his power to make his lamentations to be continually mounting toward the throne of thy mercy, in order to prevail that thou thyself mayest come to his aid; that thou mayest interfere to

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put a check upon his passions, to clear up his errors, to sustain his weakness, to lessen his temptations, to abridge his hours of trials, and to save him from his backslidings?

The Christian is therefore a man of prayer; his origin, his situation, his nature, his wants, his place of abode, all inform him that prayer is necessary.

MASSILLON.

*The Christian must be Holy and a Light to others.*

THE churches of the Gentiles, while the blood of Christ was warm, and his actions fresh in the memories of men, were exemplary in holiness. They were *as stars shining in a perverse generation.* There was such a brightness in their conversations, that it pierced through the darkness of paganism, and made a visible difference between them and all others. Their words and actions were so full of zeal for the glory of God, of chastity, temperance, justice, charity, that the heathens from the holiness of their lives concluded the holiness of their law, and that the doctrine that produced such fruits could not be evil. The first light that discovered the truth of the Christian faith to many, was from the graces and virtues that appeared in the faithful. The purity of their lives, their courage in death, were as powerful to convert the world, as their sermons, disputations, and miracles. And those who were under such strong prejudices that they would not examine the doctrine of the Gospel, yet they could not but admire the integrity and innocency ~~was~~ visible in the conversation of Christians. They esteemed their persons from the good qualities that were visible in them, when they hated the Christian name for the revealed evil they unreasonably suspected to be under it. This Tertullian excellently represents in his apology; 'The most part are so prejudiced against the name, and are possessed with such a blind hatred to it, that they make it a matter of reproach even to those whom they otherwise esteemed. 'Caius,' they say, 'is a good man; he hath no fault, but that he is a Christian.' Thus the excellent holiness of the professors of the Gospel forced a veneration from their enemies. But we are fallen from heaven, and mixed with the dust. Our conversation hath nothing singular in holiness to

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distinguish us from the world. The same corrupt passions reign in professors of Christianity, as in those who are strangers from the sacred covenant. If we compare ourselves with the primitive church, we must confess our unworthiness to be called their successors. Sixteen hundred years are run out since the Son of God came down to sanctify and save the world, which are so many degrees, whereby we are descended from the first perfection. We are more distant from them in holiness than in time. So universal and great is the corruption, that it is almost as difficult to revive the dying faith of Christians, and to reform their lives according to the purity of their profession, as the conversion of the world was from heathenism to Christianity. . . .

It remains for me to press Christians to walk *as becometh the Gospel of Christ*, answerably to the holiness and purity of that divine institution, and to those great and strict obligations it lays upon us. The Gospel requires an entire holiness in all our faculties, an equal respect to all our duties: we are commanded to *cleanse ourselves from all pollutions of flesh and spirit, to be holy in all manner of conversation*. We are enjoined to be *perfecting holiness in the fear of God: to be holy, as he that hath called us is holy*. A certain measure of faith, and love, and obedience, a mediocrity in virtue, we must not content ourselves with. It is not a counsel of perfection given to some Christians only of a peculiar order and elevation; but the command of a law that without exception binds all; *Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*, Matt. v. 48. The Gospel gives dispensation to any person, nor in any duty. The doctrine that asserts there are some excellent works to which the lower sort of Christians is not obliged, is equally pernicious, both to those who do them by presumption, as if they were not due, and were therefore meritorious; and to those who neglect them, by a blind security, as if they might be saved without striving to reach the highest degrees of obedience. It is a weak pretence, that because the consummate measure of sanctification can be attained only in the next life, therefore we should not endeavour after it here; for by sincere and constant endeavours we make nearer approaches to it; and according to the degrees of our progress such are those of our joy. . . . Although

we cannot reach to complete holiness in this imperfect state, yet it is not in vain that the Gospel prescribes it, and infuses into Christians those dispositions whereby they are gradually carried to the full accomplishment of it. Not to arrive to perfection is the weakness of the flesh, not to aspire after it is the fault of the spirit.

DR. BATES.

Jesus Christ requires believers to be lights to enlighten others. He was himself, whilst on earth, the light of the world; and he intended that his disciples, after his departure should, in some measure, be what he was. They are the stars which he lights up in the church to do in some measure what he did; to point out the right road to men, and to serve them as guides in the midst of darkness. It is well known that lights and light-houses are sometimes placed on rocks in the sea, which serve particularly in dark nights to point out both the sand-banks and rocks which the mariner should avoid, and the course which he ought to steer. Jesus Christ recommends to believers to be engaged in a similar office; he would have them resemble such light-houses, and show others how they are to direct their course, in such a manner as to avoid the rocks, and so to conduct themselves in dangerous passages, that they may finally arrive safe in port. *Let your light shine before men*, Matt. 16. What our Saviour here requires is both easy and certain of success. A vessel full of liquor when placed over a fire, soon rises and runs over. So a heart warmed with the love of God cannot conceal the fire which burns within it. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh, and the eyes and the hands bear witness.

SUPERVILLE.

*It is not enough for the Christian to do no ill, he must also do good.*

*It is not enough for a Christian to live harmlessly and abstain from ill, but he must do that which is good*, Matt. vii. 21. For our Saviour excludes not only those who do against the will of his Father, but those who do not his Father's will. It is doing good which he requireth, and not the not doing evil only. This is an error which taketh hold of a great part of men, even of those who would seem to be religious. He is a reformed man, and acquits himself well, who abstains from fornication, adultery, who is no thief, no cozenor or

defrauder of other men, who will not lie, or swear, or such like: but as for doing any works of piety or charity, they think they are not required of them.

But they are much deceived: for God requires some duties at our hands, which he may reward not out of any merit, but out of his merciful promise in Christ. But *not doing ill* is no service rewardable. A servant who expects wages must not only do his master no harm, but some work that is good and profitable: otherwise the best Christian would be he that should live altogether idly; for none doth less harm than he that doth nothing at all. But he that increased not his master's talent, though he had not mispent it, is adjudged *an unprofitable servant, and cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth*, Matt. xxv. 30. So also, the tree that beareth no good fruit is hewn down, though it bore none that was evil: *The axe is laid to the root of the tree; every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire*, Matt. iii. 10. The fig-tree was cursed for having no fruit, Matt. xxi. 19, not for having evil fruit. And the sentence of condemnation, as you heard before, is to pass at that great day for not having done good works, not for doing ill ones: Go, ye cursed; for when I was hungry, ye fed me not, Matt. xxv. 41-43. . . .

A universal obedience submits *only* to prohibitions of not doing *evil*; but puts in practice the injunctions of *doing good*. Many think they keep the commandments well, so they do nothing which they forbid: but the *not doing evil* is a sin as well as the *doing of evil*. An unprofitable servant was cast into outer darkness, not for spending, but for not bestowing his master's talent. The five foolish virgins were shut out of doors, not for wasting, but for not having oil in their lamps. And the wicked shall be condemned at the last day, not for wresting the meat from the hungry, but for not feeding their poor brethren; not for stripping the naked out of his clothes, but for not clothing him. It will not be enough for thee that thou bringest forth no bad fruit, but thou must bring forth good fruit. *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire*, Matt. iii. 10. What if thou steal not from thy brother? yet if thou open not thy hand to help and succour him, thou art

a robber. What if thou dost neither lie nor swear? yet if thou makest not thy mouth a glorious organ, and thy tongue a trumpet to sound forth and proclaim the love and mercy of God, thou art a deep and a round offender. What if no man can condemn thee for any evil? yet unless God and thine own conscience shall commend thee for some good thou hast done, thou art far from any assurance of faith, or *knowing thou knowest Christ* to be thy Redeemer. JOS. MEDE.

*The Christian and the Carnal Man most wonderful to each other.*

WE have their opposite thoughts and speeches of each other. *They think it strange, &c. speaking evil of you*, 1 Pet. iv. 4. The Christian and the carnal man are most wonderful to each other. The one wonders to see the other walk so strictly, and deny himself to those carnal liberties which the most take, and take for so necessary, that they think they could not live without them. And the Christian thinks it strange that men should be so bewitched, and still remain children in the vanity of their turmoil, wearying and humouring themselves from morning to night, running after stories and fancies, ever busy doing nothing; wonders that the delights of earth and sin can so long entertain and please men, and persuade them to give Jesus Christ so many refusals, to turn from their life and happiness, and choose to be miserable, yea, and take much pains to make themselves miserable. He knows the depravedness and blindness of nature in this; knows it by himself, that once he was so, and therefore wonders not so much at them as they do at him; yet, the unreasonableness and frenzy of that course, now appears to him in so strong a light, that he cannot but wonder at these woful mistakes. But the ungodly wonder far more at him, not knowing the inward cause of his different choice and way. The believer, as we said, is upon the hill; he is going up, and looking back on them in the valley, *sees* their way tending to, and ending in death, and calls them to retire from it as loud as he can; he tells them the danger; but either they hear not, nor understand his language, or will not believe him: finding present ease and delight in their way, they will not consider and suspect the end of it; but they judge him the fool who will not share with them,



and take that way where such multitudes go, and with such ease, and some of them with their train, and horses, and coaches, and all their pomp; while he, and a few straggling poor creatures like him, are climbing up a craggy steep hill, and will by no means come off from that way, and partake of theirs; not knowing, or not believing that at the top of that hill he climbs, is that happy, glorious city, the new Jerusalem, whereof he is a citizen, and whither he is tending; not believing that he knows the end both of their way and of his own, and therefore would reclaim them if he could, but will by no means return unto them: as the Lord commanded the Prophet, *Let them return unto thee, but return not thou unto them*, Jer. xv. 19.

The world thinks it strange that a Christian can spend so much time in secret prayer, not knowing, nor being able to conceive of the sweetness of the communion with God which he attains in that way. Yea, while he feels it not, how sweet it is, beyond the world's enjoyments, to be but seeking after it, and waiting for it! Oh! the delight that there is in the bitterest exercise of repentance, in the very tears, much more in the succeeding harvest of joy! 'The intemperate are strangers to true pleasure,' says Aristotle. It is strange unto a carnal man to see the child of God disdain the pleasures of sin; he knows not the higher and purer delights and pleasures that the Christian is called to, and of which he hath, it may be, some part at present; but, however, the fulness of them in assured hope.

The strangeness of the world's way to the Christian, and of his to it, though somewhat unnatural, yet affects them very differently. He looks on the deluded sinners with pity, they on him with hate. Their part, which is here expressed, of wondering, breaks out in reviling: they *speak evil of you*, and what is their voice? What mean these precise fools? will they readily say. What course is this they take, contrary to all the world? Will they make a new religion, and condemn all their honest, civil neighbours that are not like them? Ay, forsooth, do all go to hell, think you, except you, and those that follow your way? We are for no more than good-fellowship and liberty; and as for so much reading and praying, those are but brain-sick, melancholy con-

ceits: a man may go to heaven like his neighbour, without all this ado. Thus they let fly at their pleasure. But this troubles not the composed Christian's mind at all: while curs snarl and bark about him, the sober traveller goes on his way, and regards them not. He that is acquainted with the way of holiness can more than endure the counter-blasts and airs of scoffs and revilings; he accounts them his glory and his riches. So, *Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*, Heb. xi. 26. LEIGHTON.

### *Power of Habits in forming the Moral Character.*

IN like manner, as habits belonging to the body are produced by external acts, so habits of the mind are produced by the exertion of inward practical principles; i. e. by carrying them into act, or acting upon them the principles of obedience, of veracity, justice, and charity. Nor can those habits be formed by any external course of action, otherwise than as it proceeds from these principles; because it is only these inward principles exerted, which are strictly acts of obedience, of veracity, of justice, and of charity. So likewise, habits of attention, industry, self-government are, in the same manner, acquired by exercise; and habits of envy and revenge by indulgence, whether in outward act, or in thought and intention; i. e. inward act, for such intention is an act. Resolutions also to do well are properly acts. And endeavouring to enforce upon our own minds a practical sense of virtue, or to beget in others that practical sense of it which a man really has himself, is a virtuous act. All these, therefore, may and will contribute towards forming good habits. But, going over the theory of virtue in one's thoughts, talking well, and drawing fine pictures of it, this is so far from necessarily or certainly conducing to form an habit of it in him who thus employs himself, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and render it gradually more insensible, i. e. form an habit of insensibility to all moral considerations. For, from our very faculty of habits, passive impressions by being repeated, grow weaker. Thoughts, by often passing through the mind, are felt less sensibly; being accustomed to danger begets intrepidity, i. e. lessens fear; to distress, lessens the passion of pity; to

instances of others' mortality, lessens the sensible apprehension of our own. And from these two observations together, that practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated acts, and that passive impressions grow weaker by being repeated upon us, it must follow, that active habits may be gradually forming and strengthening, by a course of acting upon such and such motives and excitements, whilst these motives and excitements themselves are, by proportionable degrees, growing less sensible, i. e. are continually less and less sensibly felt, even as the active habits strengthen. And experience confirms this; for active principles, at the very time that they are less lively in perception than they were, are found to be somehow wrought more thoroughly into the temper and character, and become more effectual in influencing our practice. The three things just mentioned may afford instances of it. Perception of danger is a natural excitement of passive fear and active caution; and by being inured to danger, habits of the latter are gradually wrought, at the same time that the former gradually lessens. Perception of distress in others is a natural excitement passively to pity, and actively to relieve it; but let a man set himself to attend to, inquire out, and relieve distressed persons, and he cannot but grow less and less sensibly affected with the various miseries of life, with which he must become acquainted; when yet, at the same time, benevolence, considered not as a passion, but as a practical principle of action, will strengthen; and, whilst he passively compassionates the distressed less, he will acquire a greater aptitude actively to assist and befriend them. So also, at the same time that the daily instances of men's dying around us give us daily a less sensible passive feeling or apprehension of our own mortality, such instances greatly contribute to the strengthening a practical regard to it in serious men; i. e. to form a habit of acting with a constant view to it. And this seems again further to shew, that passive impressions made upon our minds by admonition, experience, example, though they may have a remote efficacy, and a very great one, towards forming active habits, yet can have this efficacy no otherwise than by inducing us to such a course of action; and that it is not being affected by and so, but acting, which forms those

habits; only it must be always remembered, that real endeavours to enforce good impressions upon ourselves are a species of virtuous action. Nor do we know how far it is possible, in the nature of things, that effects should be wrought in us at once equivalent to habits; i. e. what is wrought by use and exercise. However, the thing insisted upon is, not what may be possible, but what is in fact the appointment of nature, which is, that active habits are to be formed by exercise. Their progress may be so gradual as to be imperceptible of its steps; it may be hard to explain the faculty by which we are capable of habits, throughout its several parts, and to trace it up to its original, so as to distinguish it from all others in our mind; and it seems as if contrary effects were to be ascribed to it. But the thing in general, that our nature is formed to yield, in some such manner as this, to use and exercise, is matter of certain experience.

Thus, by accustoming ourselves to any course of action, we get an aptness to go on, a facility, readiness, and often pleasure in it. The inclinations which rendered us averse to it grow weaker; the difficulties in it, not only the imaginary, but the real ones, lessen; the reasons for it offer themselves of course to our thoughts upon all occasions; and the least glimpse of them is sufficient to make us go on in a course of action to which we have been accustomed. And practical principles appear to grow stronger, absolutely in themselves, by exercise, as well as relatively, with regard to contrary principles; which, by being accustomed to submit, do so habitually, of course. And thus a new character, in several respects, may be formed; and many habitudes of life, not given by nature, but which nature directs us to acquire.

BR. BUTLER.

#### *Power of Quiet and Domestic Piety.*

It is not altogether inconsiderable to observe that the holy Virgin came to this great perfection and state of piety by a few, and those, modest and even exercises, and external actions. St. Paul travelled over the world, preached to the Gentiles, disputed against the Jews, confounded heretics, writ excellently learned letters, suffered dangers, injuries, affronts and persecutions to the height of wonder, and by these violences of life, action and patience, obtained the crown of an ex-

cellent religion and devotion: but the holy Virgin, although she was engaged sometimes in an active life, and in the exercise of an ordinary and small economy and government of a family, yet she arrived to her perfections by the means of a quiet and silent piety; the internal actions of love, devotion and contemplation: and instructs us, that not only those who have opportunity and powers of a magnificent religion or a pompous charity, or miraculous conversion of souls, or assiduous and effectual preachings, or exterior demonstrations of corporal mercy, shall have the greatest crowns and the addition of degrees and accidental rewards; but the silent affections, the splendors of an internal devotion, the unions of love, humility and obedience, the daily offices of prayer and praises sung to God, the acts of faith and fear, of patience and meekness, of hope and reverence, repentance and charity, and those graces which walk in a veil and silence, make great ascents to God, and as sure progress to favour and a crown, as the more ostentatious and laborious exercises of a more solemn religion. No man needs to complain of want of power, or opportunities for religious perfections; a devout woman in her closet, praying with much zeal and affections for the conversion of souls, is in the same order to a shining, like the stars in glory, as he, who by excellent discourses puts it into a more forward disposition, to be actually performed. . . . Many times God is present in the still voice, and private retirements of a quiet religion, and the constant spirituality of an ordinary life; when the loud impetuous winds, and the shining fire of more laborious, and expensive actions are profitable to others only, like a tree of balsam distilling precious liquor for others, not for its own use.

BP. TAYLOR.

*True Grace will have a uniform influence on the whole character.*

IMPRESSIONS are then saving when they are social: when they accompany one another, then do they likewise 'accompany salvation.'

Many, possibly, will pretend to high raptures, and some kind of ecstatic efforts of their love to God: many will boast much of their overflowing joys, that their souls are even distended with comforts,

and as full of peace and satisfaction as they can hold. Many may, possibly, be as confident of their election as if God had unclasped the book of life to them, turned them to the very page and line, and shewed them their names written there from all eternity. But, if you would not be deluded, be sure you look how these things are accompanied in you. If ever your love cast out a holy and filial fear of God, or your confidence and rejoicing supplant a holy trembling before him; if your assurance scorn poverty of spirit, meekness, and a holy mourning, as too mean, and too poor associates; if your faith reject good works, as too legal; or your works supersede faith, as unnecessary: believe it, these are not 'things that accompany salvation' in you; but they are glaring delusions of the devil, who hath transformed himself into an angel of light, to impose false hopes and deceitful confidences upon you. When they are separated one from another, they are separated from salvation.

They are then saving when they are grown as it were natural to us, and make up a frame of spirit.

That man cannot safely conclude that he is in a state of salvation, who only now and then feels some violent impulses and passionate motions towards that which is holy: for men may hurry apace at first settling out, but then they quickly tire. But, where grace is true and genuine, it is ordinarily digested and turned into a very nature; so that it will, in this sort, be as natural to us to serve and love God, as ever formerly it was too natural to us to sin against and provoke him. Indeed, the very best are subject to much instability. Many times it is with them as with the sea, the highest spring tides have the lowest ebbs. Sometimes their souls are like the chariots of Aminadab; and, anon, they drive on heavily: but then they are sensible of their abatement, fluxes, and changes; and, when they cannot find that vivacity and quickness of spirit which sometimes carried them forth in the performance of duties, they mourn under their present dulness and stupidity, and endeavour again to recover their former excellency.

Where these impressions are saving they are thriving and improving.

The light of the righteous is as the dawn that waxeth brighter and brighter

unto the perfect day. Declining Christians have great reason to suspect themselves; and if they quickly repent not, and recover themselves to their pristine state, and do their first works with their first zeal and alacrity, they may sadly suspect that their graces are not true; for growth in grace is the best evidence of truth of grace. Indeed, in young converts there may be a great deal of heat and fervour, which afterwards, when they are more established Christians, may abate; and they may think this a decay in their graces, when indeed it is not. For we must distinguish between a passionate love of God, and a sedate, serene love of God. Our passions do, in our first conversion, mingle more with our graces than afterwards; and then we are like a torrent, very swift and rapid, but neither so deep nor so strong. And, as little brooks and torrents, though

they run very fiercely, yet stop, and purle, and murmur at every small pebble that lies in their way; but great rivers, which seem to move with a slow and grave pace, yet bear down all mounds and dams, and whatsoever is in their way to oppose their passage. So is it here; grave and settled Christians may seem to move more slowly, without any noise or tumult; but they have a great depth and strength in them, and are able to bear down before them those temptations and oppositions, at which young novices, who are more fierce and noisy, are forced to stop, complain, and murmur. And we must estimate the growth of our graces, not only, nor indeed so much, by the violence of its efforts, as its prevalency and effectualness, which proceeds from its being more radical and habitual in us.

BR. HOPKINS.

#### SECTION V.—ON THE WORLD.

##### *An estimate of the World.*

THE world has nothing solid, nothing durable; it is only a fashion, and a fashion which passeth away. Yes, sirs, the tenderest friendships end. Honours are specious titles, which time effaces. Pleasures are amusements, which leave only lasting and painful repentance. Riches are torn from us by the violence of men, or escape us by their own instability. Great men moulder away of themselves, and reputation at length loses itself in the abysses of an eternal oblivion. The torrent of this world, whatever pains are taken to stop it. Every thing is carried away by a rapid train of passing moments, and by continual revolutions we arrive, frequently without thinking of it, at that fatal point, where time finishes, and eternity begins.

Happy then the Christian soul, who, obeying the precept of Jesus Christ, loves not the world, nor any thing that composes it: who wisely uses it as a mean, without irregularly cleaving to it as his end; who knows how to rejoice without dissipation, to sorrow without despair, to desire without anxiety, to acquire without injustice, to possess without pride, and to lose without pain! Happy yet farther the soul, who rising above itself, in spite of the body

which encumbers it, remounts to its origin; passes without pausing beyond created things, and happily loses itself in the bosom of its Creator!

ABP. FLECHIER.

The sufferings of Christ are the best medium through which to view the world in every form, and under all possible circumstances of vicissitude, of grandeur, of poverty, of affliction. What are all its enjoyments, most splendid objects, and the best style of dignity, when brought to the cross? Beheld in that mirror, pleasure of its charms, honour appears transient bubble, and even crowns themselves lose their lustre. If any thing can emphatically proclaim that *all is vanity*, it is the cross. To pour infinite contempt on all sublunary greatness, He, *whose is the earth and the fulness thereof*, took the form of a servant, chose a manger for his birthplace, and an accursed tree as his bed of honour. If any thing can humble pride, and mortify the claims of aspiring grandeur, as well as raise the hope of oppressed virtue, it must be, to view the Lord of universal nature voluntarily choosing that line of life which is most exposed to affliction, and those connexions, which human wisdom and human greatness invariably despise. To suffer and die was

the principal part of his plan, and the cross, the favourite medium through which it was to be unfolded.

REV. R. DE COURCY.

It is disparagement enough, that the Apostle casts upon all the visible things of this world, that *the things which are seen are temporal*. Be they never so glorious, yet being transitory, they cannot be worthy of our hearts. Who would care for a house of glass, if never so curiously painted and gilded? All things that are measured by time are thus brittle. Bodily substances, of what kind soever, lie open to the eye; and, being seen, can be in no other than a fading condition. Even that goodly fabric of heaven, which we see and admire, must be changed, and in a sort, dissolved. How much more vanishing are all earthly glories! And by how much shorter their continuance is, so much lower must be their valuation. We account him foolish, that will dote too much upon a flower, though never so beautiful; because we know it can be but a month's pleasure, and no care, no art can preserve it from withering. What madness then were it in us, to set our hearts upon these perishing contentments which we must soon mutually leave; we them, they us! Eternity is that only thing which is worthy to take up the thoughts of a wise man: that, being added to evil, makes the evil infinitely more intolerable; and being added to good, makes the good infinitely more desirable. O eternity! thou bottomless abyss of misery to the wicked; thou indeterminate pitch of joy to the Saints—God; what soul is able to comprehend thee? What strength of understanding is able to conceive of thee? Be thou ever in my thoughts, ever before mine eyes. Be thou the scope of all my actions, of all my endeavours; and, in respect of thee, let all this visible world be to me as nothing. And, since only the things which are not seen by the eye of sense, are eternal, Lord, sharpen thou the eyes of my faith, that I may see those things invisible; and may, in that sight, enjoy thy blessed eternity!

BR. HALL.

Consider the universal judgment even of worldly men in their last and serious hours, when the prospect of eternal things is open before them. How vastly different are their apprehensions

of temporal things in the review, from what they were in their vicious desires! How often do they break forth in the sorrowful words of the Apostle, *We have been toiling all night, and caught nothing!* When there are but a few remaining sands in the glass of time, and death shakes the glass before them, how powerfully do they preach of the emptiness and uncertainty of things below, and sigh out in Solomon's phrase, *All is vanity!* And this is more singularly observable in those who have had the fullest enjoyment of earthly things. How do they complain of the vain world and their vainer hearts, when experience has convinced them of their woful folly! Solomon, who was among other princes, as the sun in the midst of the planets, that obscures them by his illustrious brightness; he that had surveyed this continent of vanity, to make an experiment whether any satisfaction could be found in it; at last sadly declares, that all things here below are but several kinds and ranks of vanities, as ineffectual to make men happy, as counterfeit jewels of several colours are to enrich the possessor. Nay, they are not only vanity, but vexation, an empty shew that has nothing real but the vexation of disappointment. And shall we not value the judgment of men when they are best instructed, and give credit to their testimony when they are sincere? Certainly in this approach to the divine judgment they are most considerate and serious; they give the truest and justest thoughts of things, and most freely declare them. The astonishing folly of men! They are not be convinced of the error of their ways till they come to the end of them, and the sun is set, and no time remains for their returning into the way of life.

DR. BATES.

*An estimate of the world in the view of Eternity: Being the substance of a Letter addressed by Villiers, duke of Buckingham, in his last illness, to Dr. Barrow.*

MY DEAR DOCTOR,

I HAVE always looked upon you as a man of true virtue; and know you to be a person of sound judgment. For, however I may act in opposition to the principles of religion, or the dictates of reason, I can honestly assure you, I had always the highest veneration for both. The world and I may shake hands, for I dare affirm

we are heartily weary of each other. O, doctor, what a prodigal have I been of the most valuable of all possessions—*time*! I have squandered it away with a persuasion it was lasting: and now, when a few days would be worth a hecatomb of worlds, I cannot flatter myself with a prospect of half a dozen hours.

How despicable is that man who never prays to his God but in the time of his distress! In what manner can he supplicate that *omnipotent* Being in his affliction with reverence, whom, in the tide of his prosperity, he never remembered with dread? Do not brand me with *infidelity*, when I tell you I am almost ashamed to offer up my petitions to the throne of grace; or of imploring that Divine mercy in the next world which I have so scandalously abused in this. Shall ingratitude to man be looked on as the blackest of crimes, and not ingratitude to God? Shall an insult offered to the king be looked on in the most offensive light; and yet no notice taken when the King of kings is treated with indignity and disrespect?

The companions of my former libertinism would scarce believe their eyes were you to shew them this epistle. They would laugh at me as a dreaming enthusiast, or pity me as a timorous wretch, who was shocked at the appearance of futurity. They are more entitled to my pity than my resentment. A future state may very well strike terror into any man who has not acted well in this life; and he must have an uncommon share of courage who does not shrink at the presence of God.

You see, my dear doctor, the apprehensions of death will soon bring the most profligate to a proper use of their understanding. I am haunted by remorse, despised by my acquaintance, and, I fear, forsaken by my God. There is nothing so dangerous, as extraordinary abilities. I cannot be accused of vanity now, by being sensible that I was once possessed of uncommon qualifications; as I sincerely regret that I was ever blessed with any at all. My rank in life still made these accomplishments more conspicuous; and, fascinated with the general applause which they procured, I never considered about the proper means by which they should be displayed. Hence, to purchase a smile from a blockhead, whom I despised, I have frequently treated the virtuous with disre-

spect; and sported with the holy name of Heaven, to obtain a laugh from a parcel of fools, who were entitled to nothing but my contempt.

Your men of wit look on themselves as discharged from the duties of religion; and confine the doctrines of the Gospel to people of meaner understandings; and look on that man to be of a narrow genius who studies to be good. What a pity that the Holy Writings are not made the criterion of true judgment! Favour me, my dear doctor, with a visit as soon as possible. Writing to you gives me some ease. I am of opinion this is the last visit I shall ever solicit from you. My distemper is powerful. Come and pray for the departing spirit of the unhappy

BUCKINGHAM.

*The Delusion under which the Worldly-minded are.*

SHOULD a spirit of superior rank, who is a stranger to human nature, accidentally alight upon the earth, and take a survey of its inhabitants, what would his notions of us be? Would not he think, that we are a species of beings made for quite different ends and purposes than what we really are? Must not he imagine that we were placed in this world to get riches and honours? Would not he think that it was our duty to toil after wealth, and station, and title? Nay, would not he believe we were forbidden poverty by threats of eternal punishment, and enjoined to pursue our pleasures under pain of damnation? He would certainly imagine that we were influenced by a scheme of duties quite opposite to those which are indeed prescribed to us. And truly, accordingly to such an imagination, he must conclude that we are a species of the most obedient creatures in the universe; that we are constant to our duty; and that we keep a steady eye on the end for which we were sent hither.

But how great would be his astonishment, when he learnt that we were beings not designed to exist in this world above threescore and ten years; and that the greatest part of this busy species fall short even of that age! How would he be lost in horror and admiration, when he should know that this set of creatures, who lay out all their endeavours for this life, which

scarce deserves the name of existence ; when, I say, he should know that this set of creatures are to exist to all eternity in another life, for which they make no preparations ? Nothing can be a greater disgrace to reason, than that men, who are persuaded of these two different states of being, should be perpetually employed in providing for a life of threescore and ten years, and neglecting to make provision for that which, after many myriads of years, will be still new, and still beginning ; especially when we consider that our endeavours for making ourselves great, or rich, or honourable, or whatever else we place our happiness in, may, after all, prove unsuccessful ; whereas, if we constantly and sincerely endeavour to make ourselves happy in the other life, we are sure that our endeavours will succeed, and that we shall not be disappointed of our hope.

The following question is started by one of the schoolmen. Supposing the whole body of the earth were a great ball or mass of the finest sand, and that a single grain or particle of this sand should be annihilated every thousand years : supposing then that you had it in your choice to be happy all the while this prodigious mass of sand was consuming by this slow method till there was not a grain of it left, on condition you were to be miserable for ever after ; or supposing you might be happy for ever after, on condition you would be miserable till the whole mass of sand were thus annihilated, at the rate of one sand in a thousand years ; which of these two cases would you make your choice ?

It must be confessed in this case, so many thousands of years are to the imagination as a kind of eternity, though in reality they do not bear so great a proportion to that duration which is to follow them, as an unit does to the greatest number which you can put together in figures, or as one of those sands to the supposed heap. Reason therefore tells us, without any manner of hesitation, which would be the better part in this choice. However, as I have before intimated, our reason might in such a case be so overset by the imagination, as to dispose some persons to sink under the consideration of the great length of the first part of this duration, and of the great distance of that second

duration which is to succeed it. The mind, I say, might give itself up to that happiness which is at hand, considering that it is so very near, and that it would last so very long. But when the choice we actually have before us is this, whether we will choose to be happy for the space of threescore and ten years, nay, perhaps, of only twenty or ten years, I might say, of only a day or an hour, and miserable to all eternity ; or on the contrary, miserable for this short term of years, and happy for a whole eternity ; what words are sufficient to express that folly and want of consideration which in such a case makes a wrong choice ?

I here put the case, even at the worst, by supposing (what seldom happens) that a course of virtue makes us miserable in this life ; but if we suppose (as it generally happens) that virtue will make us more happy, even in this life, than a contrary course of vice ; how can we sufficiently admire the stupidity or madness of those persons who are capable of making so absurd a choice !

Every wise man, therefore, will consider this life only as it may conduce to the happiness of the other, and cheerfully sacrifice the pleasures of a few years to those of an eternity.

ADDISON.

### *The Force of the World.*

NEED I stop to speak of the FORCE of the world ? Like a rapid stream, it carries all before it. None but they who are *born of God* ever really overcome it. It has been the same in all ages and circumstances. If it be impeded and stopped in one channel, it breaks out in another. It bears along the restraints of education and conscience, and overcomes the embankments which law or morals or religion can throw up. Where it cannot flow in a full tide, it works a secret course. It spreads like a resistless torrent on all hands. The young and amiable, whom religion especially addresses, and whose consciences, yet tender, might be thought most susceptible of piety, are carried along, as well as the aged and infirm, from whose feeble but tenacious grasp all earthly objects are escaping. The acute and penetrating, whose minds, enlarged by science, might be supposed to soar to higher pursuits, and who cannot but detect

the miserable folly of a worldly life, mingle in the throng with the uneducated and trifling. The disappointed still press on in the train, in spite of repeated experience. The very ministers of the sanctuary are at times not altogether free from the infection, and confirm by a low standard of religious feeling and instruction, the errors of the unthinking multitude. Even those who openly inveigh in the spirit of a proud philosophy against the trifles of life, submit to its tyranny. Rooted in short in a corrupt heart, the spirit of the world acts with a force which only true and spiritual religion, founded on the almighty grace of Christ Jesus, can effectually withstand.

REV. D. WILSON.

*We are rather to retreat from the World than oppose it.*

WE are rather to *retreat from the world*, than oppose it. Defilement is inseparable from the world. A man can nowhere rest his foot on it without sinking. A strong principle of assimilation combines the world and the heart together. There are, especially, certain occasions, when the current hurries a man away, and he has lost the religious government of himself. When the pilot finds, on making the port of Messina, that the ship will not obey the helm, he knows that she is got within the influence of that attraction, which will hurry her in the whirlpool. We are to avoid the danger, rather than to oppose it. This is a great doctrine of Scripture. An active force against the world is not so much inculcated, as a retreating, declining spirit. *Keep thyself unspotted from the world.*

REV. R. CECIL.

*The Misery of an Irreligious Old Age.*

WHEN the pulse indeed beats high, and we are flushed with youth, and health, and vigour; when all goes on prosperously, and success seems almost to anticipate our wishes; then we feel not the want of the consolations of religion: but when fortune frowns, or friends forsake us; when sorrow, or sickness, or old age, comes upon us, then it is that the superiority of the pleasures of religion is established over those of dissipation and vanity, which are ever apt to fly from us when we are most in want of their aid. There is scarcely a

more melancholy sight to a considerate mind, than that of an old man, who is a stranger to those only true sources of satisfaction. How affecting, and at the same time how disgusting, is it, to see such a one awkwardly catching at the pleasures of his younger years, which are now beyond his reach; or feebly attempting to retain them, while they mock his endeavours and elude his grasp! To such a one, gloomily indeed does the evening of life set in! All is sour and cheerless. He can neither look back with complacency, nor forward with hope: while the aged Christian, relying on the assured mercy of his Redeemer, can calmly reflect, that his dismissal is at hand, and that his redemption draweth nigh: while his strength declines, and his faculties decay, he can quietly repose himself on the fidelity of God: and at the very entrance of the valley of the shadow of death, he can lift up an eye, dim perhaps, and feeble, yet occasionally sparkling with hope, and confidently looking forward to the near possession of his heavenly inheritance, even *to those joys which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.*

Never were there times which inculcated more forcibly, than those in which we live, the wisdom of seeking a happiness beyond the reach of human vicissitudes. What striking lessons have we had of the precarious tenure of all sublunary possessions! Wealth, and power, and prosperity, how peculiarly transitory and uncertain! But Religion dispenses her choicest cordials in the seasons of exigence, in poverty, in exile, in sickness, and in death. The essential superiority of that support which is derived from religion is less felt, at least it is less apparent, when the Christian is in full possession of riches, and splendour, and rank, and all the gifts of nature and fortune. But when all these are swept away by the rude hand of time, or the rough blasts of adversity, the true Christian stands, like the glory of the forest, erect and vigorous; stripped indeed of his summer foliage, but more than ever discovering to the observing eye the solid strength of his substantial texture;

Pondere fixa suo est, nudosque per æra ramos  
Attollens, trunco non frondibus efficit unbram.

WILBERFORCE.



*The power of Faith in Christ to shew us the vanity and poverty of the World.*

'GET an eye of faith, to look through and above the creature.' A man shall never get to look off from the world, till he can look beyond it. For the soul will have holdfast of something; and the reason why men cling so much to the earth is, because they have no assurance, if they let go that hold, of having any subsistence elsewhere. Labour, therefore, to get an interest in Christ, to find an everlasting footing in the steadfastness of God's promises in him, and that will make thee willing to suffer the loss of all things; it will implant a kind of hatred and disestimation of all the most precious endearments, which thy soul did feed upon before. Saint Peter saith of wicked men, that they are purblind, *they cannot see afar off*: they can see nothing but that which is next them; and therefore no marvel, if their thoughts cannot reach unto the end of the creature. There is in a dim eye the same constant and habitual indisposition, which sometimes happeneth unto a sound eye by reason of a thick mist: though a man be walking in a very short lane, yet he sees no end of it: and so a natural man cannot reach to the period of earthly things. Death and danger are still a great way out of his sight: whereas the eye of faith can look upon them as already expiring; and, through them, look upon him who therefore gives the creatures unto us, that in them we might see his power, and taste his goodness. And nature itself methinks may seem to have intended some such thing as this, in the very order of the creatures. Downwards a man's eye hath something immediately to fix on; all is shut up in darkness save the very surface, to note, that we should have our desires shut up too from those earthly things which are put under our feet, and hid from our eyes, and buried in their own deformity. All the beauty, and all the fruit of the earth is placed on the very outside of it, to show how short and narrow our affections should be towards it. But upward the eye finds scarce any thing to bound it: all is transparent and diaphanous, to note how vast our affections should be towards God; how endless our thoughts and desires of his kingdom; how present to our faith the heavenly things should be, even at the greatest distance. The Apostle saith, that

*faith is the substance of things hoped for, that it gives being and present subsistency to things far distant from us; makes those things which, in regard of natural causes, are very remote, in regard of God's promises, to seem hard at hand. And therefore though there were many hundred years to come in the Apostle's time, and for aught we know, may yet be to the dissolution of the world, yet the Apostle tells us, that even then it was the last hour; because, faith being able distinctly to see the truth and promises of God, and the endlessness of that life which is then presently to be revealed, the infinite excess of vastness in that, made that which was otherwise a great space, even seem as nothing, no more in comparison, than the length of a cane or trunk, through which a man looks on the heavens, or some vast country. And ever, the greater magnitude and light there is in a body, the smaller will the medium or distance seem from it. . . We, by faith apprehending an infinite and everlasting glory, must needs conceive any thing through which we look upon it to be but short and vanishing. And therefore though the promises were afar off, in regard of their own existence, yet the patriarchs did not only see but embrace them; their faith seemed to nullify and swallow up all the distance. Abraham saw Christ's day, and was glad: he looked upon those many ages which were between him and his promised seed, as upon small and inconsiderable distances in comparison of that endless glory into which they ran: they were but as a curtain or piece of hangings, which divide one room in a house from another. Labour therefore to get a distinct view of the height and length, and breadth, and depth, and the unsearchable love of God in Christ, to find in thine own soul the truth of God in his promises, and that his word abideth for ever; and that will make all the glory of other things to seem but as grass.*

BR. REYNOLDS.

*All the glory of Man is as the flower of the field.*

THERE is, indeed, a great deal of seeming difference betwixt the outward conditions of life amongst men. Shall the rich, and honourable, and beautiful, and healthful go in together, under the same name, with the baser and unhappier part, the

poor, wretched sort of the world, who seem to be born for nothing but sufferings and miseries? At least, hath the wise no advantage beyond the fools? Is all grass? Make you no distinction? No, *all is grass*; or if you will have some other name, be it so: yet still, this is true, that all flesh is grass; and if that glory which shines so much in your eyes, must have a difference, then this is all it can have,—it is but *the flower* of that same grass; somewhat above the common grass in gayness, a little comelier, and better apparelled than it, but partaker of its frail and fading nature; it hath no privilege nor immunity that way, yea, of the two, is the less durable, and usually shorter lived; at the best it decays with it: *The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away.*

How easily and quickly hath the highest splendour of a man's prosperity been blasted, either by men's power, or by the immediate hand of God! The Spirit of the Lord blows upon it, as Isaiah there says, and by that, not only withers the grass, but the flower fades though never so fair. *When thou correctest man for iniquity*, says David, *thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth*, Psal. xxxix. 11. How many have the casualties of fire, or war, or shipwreck, in one day, or in one night, or in a small part of either, turned out of great riches into extreme poverty? And the instances are not few, of those who have, on a sudden, fallen from the top of honour into the foulest disgraces, not by degrees coming down the stair they went up, but tumbled down headlong. And the most vigorous beauty and strength of body, how doth a few days' sickness, or if it escape that, a few years' time, blast that flower! Yea, those higher advantages which have somewhat both of truer and more lasting beauty in them, the endowments of wit, and learning, and eloquence, yea, and of moral goodness and virtue; yet they cannot rise above this world; they are still, in all their glory, but the *flower of grass*; their root is in the earth. Natural ornaments are of some use in this present life, but they reach no further. When men have wasted their strength, and endured the toil of study night and day, it is but a small parcel of knowledge they can attain to, and they are forced to lie down in the dust in the midst of their pursuit of it. That head that lodges most sciences, shall within a while

be disfurnished of them all, and the tongue that speaks most languages be silenced.

The great projects of kings and princes, and they also themselves, come under this same notion: all the vast designs that are framing in their heads fall to the ground in a moment; *They return to their dust, and in that day all their thoughts perish*, Psal. cxlvi. 4. Archimedes was killed in the midst of his demonstration.

If they themselves did consider this in the heat of their affairs, it would much allay the swelling and loftiness of their minds; and if they who live upon their favour would consider it, they would not value it at so high a rate, and buy it so dear as often as they do. *Men of low degree are vanity*, says the Psalmist (Psal. lxii. 9); but he adds, *Men of high degree are a lie*. From base, mean persons, we expect nothing; but the estate of great persons promises fair, and often keeps not; therefore they are a lie, although they can least endure that word.

LEIGHTON.

*Lord, teach us to number our days.*

MANKIND generally miscount their time. The most part reckon upon living to the utmost period of human life; that is, that they shall see threescore years and ten, or fourscore. The fallacy of which computation may be easily found out by this observation; let a man turn his eyes round him, either in the place he lives, or in any country he is in, he shall see but few left to die at that age.

The most part again count, that the common measure of human life is a much longer duration than really it is; after they have promised themselves a life of seventy or eighty years, they look upon this as a very long succession of time, and a vast continuance in the world; when yet really it is not. And the surest way to be convinced and made sensible of this, is, not to look forward to the time we have no experience of, but to look backwards to the time that is past, and of which we have had an actual distinct perception: and here let us reflect how quickly are thirty, forty, or fifty years gone; how suddenly they are passed away, like a dream! And may we not be sure, that any time that remains shall pass as swiftly, and be as short?

Some number the same years twice over. They reckon it as time future that is past;

that is, they count upon living threescore and ten years, or fourscore, without considering that perhaps the best half, and which is also the most improvable part of them, is already gone. What a cheat is this that men put upon themselves! They have accustomed themselves to think that seventy or eighty years is a very long tract of time, and have swelled their mind with a big idea of the same; and they still fix this idea to the short remains of a life that is already much worn out, or has seen thirty, forty, fifty, or perhaps sixty of these years already past; and so thirty, twenty, or perhaps only ten years are counted, and promised as much upon, as if they were fourscore!

Others count and reckon upon the time that is lost: that is, they reckon upon the whole measure and duration of three or fourscore years, and never make a deduction of the time that is lost. As, for instance, so much time is lost in sloth and idleness; for though men are apt to complain of the shortness, yet many of them find it as a burden in their hands; they know not how to dispose of, or what to make of it; it is something they have little use for, and know not what to do with, but let it slip from them, without observation, in careless neglect. So much time is spent in sleep, which is so much time lost; since, when it was passing, we had no perception of the same, and so could not count it in our thoughts. So much time is spent in vain thoughts and impertinent digressions of the mind, and so the measure of that time is also lost. Again, so much time is spent in heart-dividing cares and vexing fears, which is a portion of time of so little value, that men are content to bury it in deep sleep. And, when all these deductions are made, how short is man's time on earth! And how little, or nothing, in comparison of eternity! And yet in the ordinary computation of the threescore or fourscore years of a man's life, all these parts of time ordinarily come into the reckoning, and swell the account.

Others again, though they see themselves nearer the end of time, yet they reckon not upon being nearer eternity. There cannot be a greater stupidity than this; since it is certain there can be no medium betwixt time and eternity: for, as soon as we are carried down to the end of time, we launch out into the ocean of boundless eternity. And yet men, whose

thoughts have been wholly possessed with time and its enjoyments, cannot bring their minds to think on eternity. Hence, though they see themselves near the end of time, they never think on eternity. Though one would think, that, the nearer we draw to the conclusion of time, we should be the more awakened with the lively views of eternity; yet it is not always so, but often it happens, that those who have been always in use to think that eternity is far off and at a distance, cannot be brought to think that it is near; which arises not so much from a senselessness of time, as a thoughtlessness of eternity.

*Lord, teach us so to number our days, that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.* Time glides away swiftly, and passes on without delay. Every day brings us a step nearer to eternity; and it is but a small part of it that now remains to do all that is to be done, or can be done, for an eternal life and happiness. And are we redeeming it for this end? Is this the use we are making of our time? Are we living in it, or only spending and consuming it away? We are flying away like shadows, and fade like the flowers of the field, and every hour of that time must be precious, on which depends a blessed eternity, or which is intended as a preparation for the same: and do we so value and improve it? Are we casting up daily our accounts with God, and keeping matters clear between him and our souls? Are we busy in doing the best things, in the best manner we can, through grace? *Oh that there were such a heart in us! Oh that we knew the things that belong to our peace, before they be hid from our eyes!*

REV. W. CRAWFORD.

### *On Scepticism.*

THE immortality of the soul is a thing which so deeply concerns, so infinitely imports us, that we must have utterly lost our feeling, to be altogether cold and remiss in our inquiries about it. And all our actions or designs ought to bend so very different a way, according as we are either encouraged or forbidden, to embrace the hope of eternal rewards, that it is impossible for us to proceed with judgment and discretion, otherwise than as we keep this point always in view, which ought to be our ruling object, and final aim.

It is vain for men to turn aside their

thoughts from this eternity which awaits them, as if they were able to destroy it by denying it a place in their imagination: it subsists in spite of them; it advanceth unobserved; and death, which is to draw the curtain from it, will in a short time infallibly reduce them to the dreadful necessity of being for ever nothing, or for ever miserable.

We have here a doubt of the most affrighting consequence, and which, therefore, to entertain may be well esteemed the most grievous of misfortunes: but, at the same time, it is our indispensable duty not to lie under it, without struggling for deliverance.

He then who doubts, and yet seeks not to be resolved, is equally unhappy and unjust: but if withal he appears easy and composed, if he freely declares his indifference, nay, if he takes a vanity in professing it, and seems to make this most deplorable condition the subject of his pleasure and joy, I have not words to fix a name on so extravagant a creature. Where is the very possibility of entering into these thoughts and resolutions? What delight is there in finding oneself encompassed with impenetrable darkness? Or what consolation in despairing for ever of a comforter?

To sit down with some sort of acquiescence under so fatal an ignorance, is a thing unaccountable beyond all expression; and they who live with such a disposition, ought to be made sensible of its absurdity and stupidity, by having their inward reflections laid open to them, that they may grow wise by the prospect of their own folly. For behold how men are wont to reason, while they obstinately remain thus ignorant of what they are, and refuse all methods of instruction and illumination.

'Who has sent me into the world I know not: what the world is I know not, nor what I am myself. I am under an astonishing and terrifying ignorance of all things. I know not what my body is, what my senses, or my soul: this very part of me which thinks what I speak, which reflects upon every thing else, and even upon itself, yet is as mere a stranger to its own nature, as the dullest thing I carry about me. I behold these frightful spaces of the universe with which I am encompassed, and I find myself chained to one little corner of that vast extent, without understanding why I am placed in this

seat, rather than in any other; or why this moment of time given me to live, was assigned rather at such a point, than any other of the whole eternity which was before me, or of all that which is to come after me. I see nothing but infinities on all sides, which devour and swallow me up like an atom, or like a shadow, which endures but a single instant, and is never to return. The sum of my knowledge is, that I must shortly die: but that which I am most ignorant of is this very death, which I feel unable to decline.

'As I know not whence I came, so I know not whither I go; only this I know, that at my departure out of the world, I must either fall for ever into nothing, or into the hands of an incensed God, without being capable of deciding, which of these two conditions shall eternally be my portion. Such is my state, full of weakness, obscurity, and wretchedness. And from all this I conclude, that I ought, therefore, to pass all the days of my life without considering what is hereafter to befall me; and that I have nothing to do, but to follow my inclinations without reflection or disquiet, in doing all that, which, if what men say of a miserable eternity prove true, will infallibly plunge me into it. It is possible I might find some light to clear up my doubts; but I shall not take a minute's pains, nor stir one foot in search of it. On the contrary, I am resolved to treat those with scorn and derision who labour in this inquiry and care; and, so to run without fear or foresight, upon the trial of the grand event; permitting myself to be led softly on to death, utterly uncertain as to the eternal issue of my future condition.'

In earnest, it is a glory to religion to have so unreasonable men for its professed enemies; and their opposition is of so little danger, that it serves to illustrate the principal truths which our religion teaches. For the main scope of Christian faith is to establish those two principles, the corruption of nature and the redemption by Jesus Christ. And these opposers, if they are of no use towards demonstrating the truth of the redemption, by the sanctity of their lives, yet are at least admirably useful in showing the corruption of nature, by so unnatural sentiments and suggestions.

Nothing is so important to any man as his own estate and condition; nothing so

great, so amazing, as eternity. If, therefore, we find persons indifferent to the loss of their being, and to the danger of endless misery, it is impossible that this temper should be natural. They are quite other men in all other regards, they fear the smallest inconveniences, they see them as they approach, and feel them if they arrive, and he who passeth days and nights in chagrin or despair, for the loss of an employment, or for some imaginary blemish in his honour, is the very same mortal who knows that he must lose all by death, and yet remains without disquiet, resentment or emotion. This wonderful insensibility, with respect to things of the most fatal consequence, in a heart so nicely sensible of the meanest trifles, is an astonishing prodigy, and unintelligible enchantment, a supernatural blindness and infatuation.

A man in a close dungeon, who knows not whether sentence of death has passed upon him, who is allowed but one hour's space to inform himself concerning it, and that one hour sufficient, in case it have passed, to obtain its reverse, would act contrary to nature and sense, should he make use of this hour not to procure information, but to pursue his vanity or sport. And yet such is the condition of the persons whom we are now describing; only with this difference, that the evils with which they are every moment threatened, do infinitely surpass the bare loss of life, and that transient punishment which the prisoner is supposed to apprehend: yet they run thoughtless upon the precipice, having only cast a veil over their eyes, to hinder them from discerning it, and divert themselves with the officiousness of such as charitably warn them of their danger.

Thus not the zeal alone of those who heartily seek God, demonstrates the truth of religion, but likewise the blindness of those who utterly forbear to seek him, and who pass their days under so horrible a neglect. There must needs be a strange turn and revolution in human nature, before men can submit to such a condition, much more ere they can applaud and value themselves upon it. For supposing them to have obtained an absolute certainty, that there was no fear after death, but of falling into nothing, ought not this to be the subject rather of despair than of jollity? And is it not, therefore, the highest pitch of senseless extravagance, while we want

the certainty, to glory in our doubt and distrust?

And yet, after all, it is too visible, that man has so far declined from his original nature and as it were departed from himself, to nourish in his heart a secret seed-plot of joy, springing up from these libertine reflections. This brutal ease or indolence, between the fear of hell, and annihilation, carries somewhat so tempting in it, that not only those who have the misfortune to be sceptically inclined, but even those who cannot unsettle their judgment, do yet esteem it reputable to take up a counterfeit diffidence. For we may observe the largest part of the herd to be of this latter kind, false pretenders to infidelity, and mere hypocrites in atheism. There are persons whom we have heard declare, that the genteel way of the world consists in thus acting the bravo. This is that which they term throwing off the yoke, and which the greater number of them profess, not so much out of opinion, as out of gallantry and complaisance.

Yet, if they have the least reserve of common sense, it will not be difficult to make them apprehend how miserably they abuse themselves, by laying so false a foundation of applause and esteem. For this is not the way to raise a character, even with worldly men, who, as they are able to pass a shrewd judgment on things, so they easily discern that the only method of succeeding in our temporal affairs, is to prove ourselves honest, faithful, prudent, and capable of advancing the interest of our friends, because men naturally love nothing but that which some way contributes to their use and benefit. But now what benefit can we any way derive from hearing a man confess that he has eased himself of the burden of religion; that he believes no God, as the witness and inspector of his conduct; that he considers himself as absolute master of what he does, and accountable for it only to his own mind? Will he fancy that we shall be hence induced to repose a greater degree of confidence in him hereafter? or to depend on his comfort, his advice, or assistance, in the necessities of life? Can he imagine us to take any great delight or complacency when he tells us, that he doubts whether our very soul be anything more than a little wind and smoke? Nay, when he tells it us with an air of assurance, and a voice that testifies the contentment

of his heart? Is this a thing to be spoken of with pleasantry? or ought it not rather to be lamented with the deepest sadness, as the most melancholy reflection that can strike our thoughts?

If they would compose themselves to serious consideration, they must perceive the method in which they are engaged to be so very ill chosen, so repugnant to gentility, and so remote even from that good air and grace which they pursue, that, on the contrary, nothing can more effectually expose them to the contempt and aversion of mankind, or mark them out for persons defective in parts and judgment. And, indeed, should we demand from them an account of their sentiments, and the reasons which they have to entertain this suspicion in religious matters, what they offer would appear so miserably weak and trifling, as rather to confirm us in our belief. This is no more than what one of their own fraternity told them, with great smartness, on such an occasion. 'If you continue (says he) to dispute at this rate, you will infallibly make me a Christian.' And the gentleman was in the right; for who would not tremble to find himself embarked in the same cause, with so forlorn, so despicable companions?

And thus it is evident, that they who wear no more than the outward mask of these principles, are the most unhappy counterfeits in the world; inasmuch as they are obliged to put a continual force and constraint on their genius, only that they may render themselves the most impertinent of all men living.

If they are heartily and sincerely troubled at their want of light, let them not dissemble the disease. Such a confession could not be reputed shameful; for there really is no shame, but in being shameless. Nothing betrays so much weakness of soul, as not to apprehend the misery of man, while living without God in the world: nothing is a surer token of extreme baseness of spirit, than not to hope for the reality of external promises: no man is so stigmatised a coward, as he that acts the bravo against heaven. Let them therefore leave these impieties to those who are born with so unhappy a judgment, as to be capable of entertaining them in earnest. If they cannot be Christian men, let them, however, be men of honour: and let them, in conclusion, acknowledge, that there are

but two sorts of persons, who deserve to be styled reasonable, either those who serve God with all their heart, because they know him; or those who seek him with all their heart, because as yet they know him not.

If then there are persons who sincerely inquire after God, and who being truly sensible of their misery, affectionately desire to be rescued from it; it is to these alone that we can in justice afford our labour and service, for their direction in finding out that light of which they feel the want.

PASCAL.

### *Unbelief the Source of all Evil.*

THE strength of the whole body of sin lies in unbelief. There is no mastering of a sinner, while unbelief is in power; this will carry all arguments away (whether they be from law or gospel) that are pressed upon him. It is a sin that doth keep the field, one of the last of all others; that which the sinner is last convinced of, and the saint ordinarily last conqueror of. It is one of the chief strengths and fastnesses into which the devil retreats when other sins are routed. O how often do we hear a poor sinner confess and bewail other sins he hath lived in formerly, but will not hearken yet to the offer of mercy in Christ! bid him believe on Christ, and he shall be saved (which was the doctrine Paul and Silas preached to the trembling jailer, Acts xvi. 31), alas! he dares not, he will not, you can hardly persuade him it is his duty to do so. The devil hath now betaken himself to this city of gates and bars, where he stands upon his guard; and the more strongly to fortify himself in it, he hath the most specious pretences for it of any other sin. It is a sin that he makes the humbled soul commit, out of a fear of sinning; and so stabs the good name of God, for fear of dishonouring him by a presumptuous faith. Indeed it is a sin by which Satan intends to put the greatest scorn upon God, and unfold all his malice against him at once. It is by faith that the saints have all obtained a good report; yea, it is by the saints' faith that God hath a good report in the world; and by unbelief, the devil doth his worst to raise an evil report of God in the world; as if he were not what his own promise, and his saints' faith, witness him to be. There are two sins that claim a pre-eminence in hell, hypocrisy and unbelief; and

therefore other sinners are threatened *to have their portion with hypocrites*, Matt. xxiv. 51, and *with unbelievers*, Luke xii. 46. But of the two, unbelief is the greatest, and that which may with an emphasis be called, above this or any other, *the damning sin*. *He that believes not is condemned already*, John iii. 18. The Jews are said *to be shut up in unbelief*, Rom. xi. 32. A surer prison the devil cannot keep a sinner in. Faith shuts the soul up in the promise of life and happiness, as God shut Noah into the ark. It is said, *the Lord shut him in*, Gen. vii. 16: thus faith shuts the soul up in Christ, and the ark of his covenant, from all fear of danger; and on the contrary, unbelief shuts a soul up in guilt and wrath, that there is no possibility of escaping damnation for an unbeliever. As our salvation is attributed to faith, rather than to other graces, though none of these are wanting in a saved person; so sinners' ruin is attributed to their unbelief, though other sins are found with it: the Spirit of God passeth over the Jews' hypocrisy, murmuring, rebellion, and lays their destruction at the door of this one sin of unbelief, *they could not enter in because of unbelief*, Heb. iii. 19. O sinners (you who live under the Gospel I mean), if you perish, know beforehand what is your undoing, it is your unbelief that does it.

GURNALL.

*The Superiority that a Believer has over a Sceptic.*

WHAT a superiority hath a believer over a sceptic! What a superiority at the tribunal of authority! at the tribunal of interest! at the tribunal of history! at the tribunal of conscience! at the tribunal of reason! at the tribunal of scepticism itself! From each of these it may be truly pronounced, *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world*.

1. The believer is superior at the tribunal of authority. The sceptic objecteth against the believer the examples of some few nations, who, it is said, live without religion; and those of some philosophers, whose pretended atheism hath rendered them famous. The believer replieth to the sceptic, by urging his well grounded suspicions in regard to those historians, and travellers, who have published such examples, and, opposing authority against authority, in favour of the grand leading

principles of religion, he allegeth the unanimous consent of the whole known world.

2. At the tribunal of interest. The sceptic resisteth the believer by arguing the constraint which religion continually putteth on mankind; the pleasure of pursuing every wish without being terrified with the idea of a formidable witness of our actions, or a future account of our conduct. The believer resisteth the sceptic, by arguing the benefit of society, which would be entirely subverted, if infidels could effect their dreadful design of demolishing those bulwarks which religion builds. He urgeth the interest of each individual, who, in those periods of life, in which he is disgusted with the world; in those, in which he is exposed to catastrophes of glory and fortune; above all, in the period of death, hath no refuge from despair, if the hopes, that religion affords, be groundless.

3. At the tribunal of history. The sceptic objects to the believer the impossibility of obtaining demonstration, properly so called, of distant facts. The believer urgeth on the infidels his own acquiescence in the evidence of events, as ancient as those, the distance of which is objected; and, turning his own weapons against him, he demonstrates to him, that reasons, still stronger than those, which constrain the sceptic to admit other events, such as number of witnesses, unanimity of historians, sacrifices made to certify the testimony, and a thousand more similar proofs, ought to engage him to believe the facts on which religion is founded.

4. At the tribunal of conscience. The infidel opposeth his own experience to the believer, and boasts of having shaken off the yoke of this tyrant. The believer replies by relating the experiences of the most celebrated sceptics, and, using the infidel himself for a demonstration of the truths, which he pretends to subvert, reproaches him with feeling, in spite of himself, the remorse of that conscience, from which he affects to have freed himself; he proves that it awakes when lightning flashes, when thunders roll in the air, when the messengers of death approach to execute their terrible ministry.

5. At the tribunal of reason. The sceptic objects to the believer, that religion demands the sacrifice of reason of its disciples: that it reveals abstruse doctrines, and incomprehensible mysteries;

and that it requires all to receive its decisions with an entire submission. The believer opposeth the infidel by arguing the infallibility of the Intelligence who revealed these doctrines to us. He proves to him that the best use that can be made of reason, is to renounce it in the sense in which revelation requireth its renunciation, so that reason never walks a path so safe, nor is ever elevated to a degree of honour so eminent, as when, ceasing to see with its own eyes, it seeth only with the eyes of the infallible God.

6. The believer triumphs over the infidel at the tribunal of scepticism itself. One single degree of probability in the system of the believer, in our opinion, disconcerts and confounds the system of the sceptic; at least it ought to embitter all the fancied sweets of infidelity. What satisfaction can a man of sense find in that boasted independence, which the system of infidelity procures, if there be the least shadow of a probability of its plunging him into endless misery? But this very man, who finds the evidences of religion too weak to induce a man of sense to controul his passions, during the momentary duration of this life, this very man finds the system of infidelity so evident, that it engageth him to dare that eternity of misery, which religion denounceth against the impenitent. What a contrast! The obstinate sceptic falls into a credulity, that would be unpardonable in a child. These fiery globes, that revolve over our heads with so much pomp and glory: these heavens, that *declare the glory of God*, Psal. xix. 1: that firmament, which *sheweth his handiwork*: these successions of seasons: that symmetry of body: these faculties of mind: the martyrs, who attest the truth of the facts, on which religion is founded: the miracles, that confirm the facts: that harmony between the prophecies and their accomplishment: and all the other numerous arguments, that establish the doctrine of the existence of God, and of the truth of revelation: all these, he pretends, cannot prove enough to engage him to render homage to a Supreme Being: and the few difficulties, which he objects to us; a few rash conjectures; a system of doubts and uncertainties, seem to him sufficiently conclusive to engage him to brave that adorable Being, and to expose himself to all the miseries that attend those who affront him.

We conclude, then, that our first proposition is sufficiently justified. Truth in general, the truths of religion in particular, have a light superior to all the glimmerings of error. *Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*

SAURIN.

### *The Madness of Infidelity.*

IF a person that had a fair estate in reversion, which in all probability he would speedily be possessed of, and of which he might reasonably promise to himself a long and happy enjoyment, should be assured by some skilful physician, that in a very short time he would inevitably fall into a disease which would so totally deprive him of his understanding and memory, that he would lose the knowledge of all things without him, nay, all consciousness and sense of his own person and being: if, I say, upon a certain belief of this indication, the man should appear overjoyed at the news, and be mightily transported with the discovery and expectation, would not all that saw him be astonished at such behaviour? Would they not be forward to conclude, that the distemper had seized him already, and even then the miserable creature was become a mere fool and an idiot? Now the carriage of our atheists is infinitely more amazing than this; no dotage so infatuate, no phrensy so extravagant as theirs. They have been educated in a religion that instructed them in the knowledge of a Supreme Being; a Spirit most excellently glorious, superlatively powerful, and wise, and good, Creator of all things out of nothing; that hath endured the sons of men, his peculiar favourites, with a rational spirit, and hath placed them as spectators in this noble theatre of the world, to view and applaud these glorious scenes of earth and heaven, the workmanship of his hands; that hath furnished them in general with a sufficient store of all things, either necessary or convenient for life; and particularly to such as fear and obey him, hath promised a supply of all wants, a deliverance and protection from all dangers; that they that seek him shall want no manner of thing that is good; who, besides his munificence to them in this life, *hath so loved them, that he gave his only-begotten Son, the express image of his substance, and partaker of his eternal nature and glory, to bring life and immortality to light, and to*



tender them to mankind upon fair and gracious terms ; that if they submit to his easy yoke and light burden, and observe his commandments, which are not grievous, he then gives them the promise of eternal salvation ; he hath reserved for them in heaven, *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away* ; he hath prepared for them an unspeakable, unconceivable perfection of joy and bliss, things that *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man*. What a delightful ravishing hypothesis of religion is this ! And in this religion they have had their education. Now let us suppose some great professor in atheism to suggest to some of these men, that all this is mere dream and imposture ; that there is no such excellent Being as they suppose, that created and preserves them ; that all about them is dark and senseless matter, driven on by the blind impulses of fatality and fortune ; that men first sprung up, like mushrooms, out of the mud and slime of the earth ; and that all their thoughts, and the whole of what they call soul, are only the various action and repercussion of small particulars of matter, kept a-while a moving by some mechanism and clock-work, which finally must cease and perish by death. If it be true then (as we daily find it is) that men listen with complacency to these horrid suggestions ; if they let go their hope of everlasting life with willingness and joy ; if they entertain the thoughts of final perdition with exultation and triumph ; ought they not to be esteemed most notorious fools, even destitute of common sense, and abandoned to a calousness and numbness of soul ?

What then ! Is heaven itself, with its pleasures for evermore, to be parted with so unconcernedly ? Is a crown of righteousness, a crown of life, to be surrendered with laughter ? Is *an exceeding and eternal weight of glory* too light in the balance against the hopeless death of the atheist, and utter extinction ! !

DR. BENTLEY.

*The Sinner bent on indulging his appetites often Reasons himself into Infidelity.*

A GREAT many persons, before they proceed upon an act of known transgression, do expressly state to themselves the question, whether religion be true or not ;

and in order to get at the object of their desire, (for the real matter to be determined is, whether they shall have their desire gratified or not,) in order, I say, to get at the pleasure in some cases ; or, in other cases, the point of interest, upon which they have set their hearts, they choose to decide, and they do in fact decide with themselves, that these things are not so certain, as to be a reason for them to give up the pleasure which lies before them, or the advantage, which is now, and which may never be again, in their power to compass. This conclusion does actually take place, and, at various times, must almost necessarily take place, in the minds of men of bad morals. And now remark the effect which it has upon their thoughts afterwards. When they come at another future time to reflect upon religion, they reflect upon it as upon what they had before adjudged to be unfounded, and too uncertain to be acted upon, or to be depended upon : and reflections, accompanied with this adverse and unfavourable impression, naturally lead to infidelity. Herein, therefore, is seen the fallacious operation of sin ; first, in the circumstances under which men form their opinion and their conclusions concerning religion ; and, secondly, in the effect, which conclusions, which doubts so formed, have upon their judgment afterwards. First, what is the situation of mind in which they decide concerning religion ? and what can be expected from such a situation ? Some magnified and alluring pleasure has stirred their desires and passions. It cannot be enjoyed without sin. Here is religion, denouncing and forbidding it on one side : there is opportunity, drawing and pulling on the other. With this drag and bias upon their thoughts, they pronounce and decide concerning the most important of all subjects, and of all questions. If they should determine for the truth and reality of religion, they must sit down disappointed of a gratification, upon which they had set their hearts, and of using an opportunity which may never come again. Nevertheless they must determine one way or other. And this process, viz. a similar deliberation and a similar conclusion, is renewed and repeated, as often as occasions of sin offer. The effect, at length, is a settled persuasion against religion ; for what is it, in persons who proceed in this manner, which rests and dwells upon their

memories? What is it which gives to their judgment its turn and bias? It is these occasional decisions often repeated; which decisions have the same power and influence over the man's after-opinion, as if they had been made ever so impartially, or ever so correctly: whereas, in fact, they are made under circumstances which exclude, almost, the possibility of their being made with fairness, and with sufficient inquiry. Men decide under the power and influence of sinful temptation: but, having decided, the decision is afterwards remembered by them, and grows into a settled and habitual opinion, as much as if they had proceeded in it without any bias or prejudice whatever.

The extent to which this cause acts, that is, the numbers who are included in its influence, will be further known by the following observation. I have said, that sinners oftentimes *expressly* state to themselves the question, whether religion be true or not; and that they state to themselves this question, at the time when they are about to enter upon some act of sin, which religion condemns; and I believe the case so to be. I believe that this statement is often expressly made, and in the manner which I have represented. But there is also a tacit rejection of religion, which has nearly the same effect. Whenever a man deliberately ventures upon an action which he knows that religion prohibits, he tacitly rejects religion. There may not pass in his thoughts every step which we have described, nor may he come expressly to the conclusion; but he acts upon the conclusion, he practically adopts it. And the doing so will alienate his mind from religion, as surely, almost, as if he had formally argued himself into an opinion of its untruth. The effect of sin is necessarily, and highly, and in all cases, adverse to the production and existence of religious faith. Real difficulties are doubled and trebled, when they fall in with vicious propensities; imaginary difficulties are readily started. Vice is wonderfully acute in discovering reasons on its own side. This may be said of all kinds of vice; but, I think, it more particularly holds good of what are called licentious vices, that is, of vices of debauchery; for sins of debauchery have a tendency, which other species of sin have not so directly, to unsettle and weaken the powers of the understanding, as well as, in a greater de-

gree, I think, than other vices, to render the heart thoroughly corrupt. In a mind so wholly depraved, the impression of any argument, relating to a moral or religious subject, is faint, and slight, and transitory. To a vitiated palate no meat has its right taste; with a debauched mind no reasoning has its proper influence.

DR. PALEY.

*The easy transition from Infidelity to Superstition.*

WE know the transition is very easy from superstition to infidelity; and I should be glad to know, why it should not be as easy from infidelity to superstition; since we are very apt to run from one extreme to another. The present declared scheme of deism is this; that people must be left to collect every one a religion for himself independently, according as their ignorance, short-sightedness, or passions, which to be sure they will call their reason, shall mislead. Now as the best king that ever sat on the throne could not wish a nation more happiness than that the precepts of the Gospel should be universally obeyed, and the doctrines of it, those strong incentives to virtue, universally believed through his kingdom; so the most ill-natured being, the most accursed spirit, could not wish a nation greater confusion than their scheme, so big with evils, would occasion if it should take place. The consequence of which would be, that as soon as the people opened their eyes, and saw the numerous train of miseries that it had plunged them into, how an unrestrained freedom of thought had every where produced a correspondent freedom in action, they would conceive an utter abhorrence of what had been the source of so many evils; and resolved to fly precipitately through an inveterate, undistinguishing hatred, as far as ever they could get from infidelity (the farther, they would think, the better) they would run into the very jaws of popery. They might indeed rove about for a while pleased in the mazes of error; but weary of so many crude notions, weary of wandering, ever *seeking rest, and finding none*, they might be tempted at last to take up with a pretended infallible guide. Thus this nation would tread in a round of error. The cant and enthusiasm in the time of the grand rebellion begat in the next generation an abandoned profaneness and im-

morality, which was productive of infidelity, which hath been growing ever since; and infidelity may at last, if it goes on, produce enthusiasm, or something worse. We dance in a circle, and may end just in the same point where we set out.

Be this as it will; it is but too melancholy a prospect that the youth of the nation are almost universally poisoned in their principles, and those who should be the flower of the nation, are, alas! but too generally become the very dregs of it. Formerly indeed, as well as now, the sallies of youthful blood would hurry them into several extravagances and irregularities; yet still their principles continued sound and uncorrupt, which would exert themselves as soon as the youthful ferment abated. But now they take care to corrupt their principles first; which ever after shuts up all avenues to a reformation. Hence that flagrant contempt of all authority divine and human. Hence that avowed disregard to all subordination of servants to their masters, children to their parents, subjects to their king. And why should those wonder at this, who have taken no care to cultivate a due use of the greatest regard, the foundation of all the rest, that of a creature to his Creator?

SEED.

#### *The real Character of a lukewarm Professor.*

LET us consider lukewarmness, as it relates to practice. Now hot, and cold, and lukewarm, must signify the different tempers of men's minds, and relate to our inward sense and passions. To be cold, is to have no sense at all of God or religion, no stirrings or motions of our affections that way. To be hot, is to have a lively and vigorous sense of God, a heat and fervour of spirit in all acts of devotion, a restless and unwearied zeal in doing good. Lukewarmness is between both these: such a man retains some sense of God, and of religion, and therefore is not stark cold. He observes the public acts of worship, and possibly is not a perfect stranger to closet devotions. He may abstain from gross immoralities, and do many good things; but he feels very little of his religion, has none of those passions which belong to a spiritual life, and feels none of the pleasures of it. His religion is like the motion of a machine, without an inward principle of nature and life: he must do something to quiet his

conscience; and he does it, not because he likes it, but because it gives him ease.

It is true our passions are such uncertain and changeable things, that we must not always judge of ourselves by sensible heats and transports. With respect to the passionate parts of religion, no man is always the same; and good men differ from each other, according to their natural frame and temper. Some men's passions are more easily fired, more disposed to rapture and ecstasy; others have as true and quick a sense, but a more calm and equal motion; and art may sometimes counterfeit nature, and a disease may outdo it, as the burning of a fever does the natural and vital heat: and therefore I shall not refer the judgment of this matter wholly to the sensible motions of passion; for good men may sometimes in their devotions find very little of it, and lukewarm formalists may feel some accidental heats and transports. But there are more certain indications of this which cannot deceive us.

A lukewarm formalist makes as little religion as may be serve the turn; and thus it must be, when religion is a mere task, and not a principle of life. The great inquiry of such men is, what strict duty requires of them; how much they are bound to do by express and positive laws? How often they must pray, and go to church, and hear the word of God read and preached, and receive the Holy Sacrament? And how seldom they may do all this without sin? And because they do not find in Scripture any positive determination of these matters, they choose for themselves, and make as little serve as will quiet their consciences, (which are usually very reasonable) and avoid the scandal and censure of the world. They cry out loudly against those who impose difficult and unreasonable tasks, and say very truly, that God never intended to make religion our burden: and it seems they know no way to make it easy, but to take a little of it. Now, wherever this is found, it is a certain demonstration of a lukewarm formalist, who has no natural warmth or heat, no vital sense of religion. Nature never desires to be excused; strength and appetite are the only measures it knows. Our Saviour has prescribed no certain measure to our devotions, but the different degrees of a new and spiritual life will do this. Then religion grows burdensome, when we ex-

tend the exercise of our devotion beyond the life and vigour of it. But a truly devout mind, according to the degrees and strength of its devotion, will as certainly call upon us for the returns of duty, as an empty stomach calls for meat: and, therefore, when the exact proportions of duty must be prescribed, and the less the better, this is not nature and life, but a counterfeit imitation. Such men have so much sense left, as to know that they ought to serve God; but have no principle of spiritual life and sense to serve him with.

DR. W. SHERLOCK.

*On reproachful epithets directed against Religious Persons.*

A THOUGHTFUL judge of sentiments, books, and men, will often find reason to regret that the language of censure is so easy and so undefined. It costs no labour, and needs no intellect, to pronounce the words foolish, stupid, dull, odious, absurd, ridiculous. The weakest or most uncultivated mind may therefore gratify its vanity, laziness, and malice, all at once, by a prompt application of vague condemnatory words, where a wise and liberal man would not feel himself warranted to pronounce without the most deliberate consideration; and where such consideration might perhaps terminate in applause. Thus the most excellent performances, whether in the department of thinking or of action, might be consigned to contempt, (if there were no better judges,) on the authority of those who could not even understand them. A man who wishes some decency and sense to prevail in the circulation of opinions, will do well, when he hears these decisions of ignorant arrogance, to call for a precise explication of the manner in which the terms apply to the subject.

There is a competent number of words for this use of cheap censure; but though a man deems himself to be giving no mean proof of sagacity in this confident readiness to condemn, even with this impotence of language, he may however have a certain consciousness that there is, in some other minds, a keen dexterity which would find expressions to bite harder than the words dull, stupid, and ridiculous, which he is repeating many times to compensate for the incapacity of hitting off the right thing at once. These vague epithets describe

nothing, discriminate nothing; they express no species, are as applicable to ten thousand things as to this one; and he has before employed them on a numberless diversity of subjects. But he can perceive that censure or contempt has the smartest effect, when its expressions have an appropriate peculiarity, which adapts them more precisely to the present subject than to another, and he is therefore not quite satisfied with the expressions which say 'about it and about it,' but do not say the thing itself; which rather shew his mischievous will than prove his mischievous power. He wants words and phrases which would make the edge of his clumsy meaning fall just where it ought. Yes, he wants words; for his meaning is sharp, he knows, if only the words would come. Discriminative censure must be conveyed either in a sentence which expresses some marked and acute turn of thought, instead of simply applying an epithet, or in an epithet so specifically appropriate, that the single word is sufficient to fix the condemnation by the mere precision with which it describes. But as the censurer perhaps cannot succeed in either of these ways, he is willing to seek some other resource. And he may often find it in cant terms, which have a more spiteful force, and seem to have more particularity of meaning, than plain common words, without needing any shrewdness for their application. Each of these is supposed to denominate some one class or character of scorned or reprobated things, but leaves it so imperfectly defined, that dull malice may venture to assign to the class any thing which it would desire to throw under the odium of the denomination. Such words serve for a mode of collective execution, somewhat like the vessels which, in a season of outrage in a neighbouring country, received a promiscuous crowd of reputed criminals, of unexamined and dubious similarity, and were then sunk in the flood. You cannot wonder that such compendious words of decision, which can give quick vent to crude impatient censure, emit plenty of antipathy in a few syllables, and save the condemner the difficulty of telling exactly what he wants to mean, should have had an extensive circulation.

*Puritan* was, doubtless, welcomed as a term of most lucky invention when it began to be applied in contempt to a class

of men, of whom the world was not worthy. Its peculiarity gave it almost such an advantage as that of a proper name, among the lumber of common words by which they were described and reviled; while yet it meant any thing, every thing, which the vain world disliked in the devout character. To the more sluggish it saved, and to the more loquacious it relieved, the labour of endless repeating, 'demure rogues,' 'sanctimonious pretenders,' 'formal hypocrites.'

This term has long since lost its point, and is almost forgotten; but some word of a similar cast was indispensably necessary to the vulgar of both kinds. The vain and malignant spirit which had decried the elevated piety of the Puritans, sought about (as Milton describes the wicked one in Paradise) for some convenient form in which it might again come forth to hiss at zealous Christianity, and in another lucky moment fell on the term *Methodist*. If there is no sense in the word, as now applied, there seems however to be a great deal of aptitude and execution. It has the advantage of being comprehensive as a general denomination, and yet opprobrious as a special badge, for every thing that ignorance and folly may mistake for fanaticism, or that malice may wilfully assign to it. Whenever a grave formalist feels it his duty to sneer at those operations of religion on the passions, which he never felt, he has only to call them *methodistical*; and notwithstanding that the word is both so trite and so vague, he feels as if he had uttered a good pungent thing. There is satiric smartness in the word, though there be none in the man. In default of keen faculty in the mind, it is delightful thus to find something that will do as well, ready bottled up in odd terms. It is not less convenient to a profligate, or a coxcomb, whose propriety of character is to be supported by laughing indiscriminately at religion in every form; the one, to evince that his courage is not sapped by conscience; the other, to make the best advantage of his instinct of catching at impiety as a substitute for sense. The word *methodism* so readily sets aside all religion as superstitious folly, that they pronounce it with an air as if no more needed to be said. Such terms have a pleasant facility of throwing away the matter in question to scorn, without any trouble of making a definite intelligible

charge of extravagance or delusion, and attempting to prove it.

FOSTER.

### *Opposition of the Natural Man to God.*

WE are enemies to God's sovereignty in setting up self.

Man imagined, at first, that by eating the forbidden fruit he should have such a knowledge of good and evil, as to be independent upon God, and bottomed upon himself, and his own will.

This self in us is properly the old Adam, the true offspring of the first corrupted man. This is the great antichrist, the great antigod in us, which sits in the heart, the temple of God, and would be adored as God, would be the chiefest, as the highest end. This is the great usurper in the world, for it invades the right of God; it is the most direct compliance and likeness to the devil, whose actions centre wholly in malicious self-will. In this respect I suppose the devil is called *the god of this world*, because he acts so as if the world should only serve his ends.

Self is the centre of many men's religious actions; while God seems to be the object, self is the end; *Did you fast unto me?* Zech. vii. 5.

This being the motive of hypocrisy, makes it more idolatry, and so more odious to God; other sins subject only the creature to self, but this subjects the soul, and even God himself to corrupt self. Self-love leads the van, *Men shall be lovers of their own selves*, 2 Tim. iii. 2, of that black regiment which marches behind it, and is concluded with the *having a form of godliness, and denying the power of it*; and a denying the power of godliness, is a denying the sovereignty of God.

The righteousness a man would establish in opposition to God, is called a man's own; a righteousness of his own framing, that hath its rise only from himself, *going about to establish their own righteousness*, Rom. x. 3.

Sin and self are all one; what is called a *living in sin* in one place, is *living to self in another*, Rom. vi. 2. *That they which live should not live to themselves*, 2 Cor. v. 15. What a man serves, and directs all his projects, and the whole labour of his life to, that is his god and lord, and that is self.

All inferior things act for some superior as their immediate end: this order hath

nature constituted; the lesser animals are designed for the greater; the irrational for man, and man for something higher and nobler than himself; for all beings naturally should, in their several stations, tend to the service of the first Being. Now to make ourselves the end, and all other things to act for ourselves, is to make ourselves the Supreme Being, to deny any superior as the centre to which our actions should be directed, and usurp God's place, who alone being the Supreme Being, can be his own end: For if there were any thing higher and better than God, his own purity and goodness would cause him to act for that as more noble and worthy.

I appeal to you, whether you have not sometimes secret wishes, that you were in the place of God; for where there is a slavish fear of him, there must needs be such wishes, according to the degrees of fear; and so you have wished God undeified, that you might be advanced to the Godhead.

This some think to be the sin of the devils, affecting an independency on God by a proud reflection upon their own created excellency, and at least a delightful wish, if not an endeavour to make themselves the ultimate end of all their actions.

We are enemies to God's sovereignty in setting up the world.

When we place this in our heart, God's proper seat and chair, we deprive God of his propriety, and do him the greatest wrong, in giving the possession of his right to another. The Apostle gives covetousness no better title than that of idolatry, Col. iii. 5. And the Psalmist puts the atheist's cap upon the oppressor's head, *Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the Lord*, Psal. xiv. 4. What we make the chief object of our desires, is to us in the place of God. The poor Indians made a very natural and rational consequence, that gold was the Spaniards' God, because they hunted so greedily after it. This is an intolerable dethroning of God, to make that which is God's footstool to climb up into his throne; to bow down to an atom, a little dust and mud of the world, a drop out of the ocean; to set that in thy heart, which God hath made even below thyself, and put under thy feet; and to make that which thou tramplest upon, to tread down the right God hath to thy heart. Alas! who serves God with that care, and with that spirit that he serves the world with?

We are enemies to God's sovereignty in setting up sensual pleasures.

Love is a commanding affection, and gives the object a power over us; what we chiefly love, we readily obey. Now men are said to be φιλήδονοι μᾶλλον ἢ φιλόθεοι, 2 Tim. iii. 4. A glutton's belly is said to be his god, because his projects and affections are devoted to the satisfaction of that; and he lays in not for the service of God, but a magazine for lust. If you preferred some honourable thing which might perfect your natures, as learning, wisdom, moral virtues; though this were an indignity to be censured by the judge of all the world, yet it would be more tolerable; but to consecrate your heart and time to a sordid voluptuousness, and feed it with the cream of your strength, this is an inexcusable contempt, to pay a quick and lively service to an effeminate delight, which is only due to the Supreme Lord.

Doth not that man dethrone God, and hate him that will be under the command of a swinish pleasure; and make that the supreme end of his life and actions, rather than to be under the righteous government of God? The greatest excellency in the world is infinitely below our Creator; how much more must a bestial delight be below him which is so exceedingly disgraceful to, and below the nature of man? If we should love all the creatures in heaven and earth above God, it were more excusable than to degrade him in our affections beneath a brutish pleasure. Why doth any man court an ignoble sensuality with the displeasure of God, hell and damnation at the end of it, if he did not value it above God, as well as above his own soul?

The more sordid any thing is that we set up in the place of God, the greater is the despite done to him, Ezek. viii. 5. When the Prophet saw the image of jealousy at the gate, God tells him there were greater abominations than that, which are described, v. 10, *creeping things, and abominable beasts*; viz. the Egyptian idols.

The viler the thing is which possesses our heart, the greater slight is put upon God, and the greater the abomination.

We are enemies to God's sovereignty in setting up the devil.

Every sin is an election of the devil to be our Lord: if sin had a voice, it would give its suffrage for such a lord as would favour its interest.

As the Spirit dwells in a godly man to guide him, so doth the devil in a natural man, to direct him to evil; so that every sin is an effect of the devil's government: therefore sins are called his lusts, which natural men (who being the devil's children, are under his paternal government) fulfil and do with a resolute obedience: *his lusts you will do*, John viii. 44.

If we divide sins into spiritual and carnal, which division comprehends all sin; we shall find that in both we own the devil's authority, either in obeying his commands, or in conforming to his example. Some are said to be his lusts subjective, as he commits them; others dispositive, as he directs them. In spiritual he is an actor, in carnal a tempter. In carnal, men obey his commands; in spiritual, they model themselves according to his pattern. In the one they are his servants, to do his work; in the other his children, to partake of his nature. In the one we acknowledge him as our master; in the other we own him as our copy. In both we derogate from God's sovereignty over us, whom we are bound to imitate, as well as to obey. Every sin, in its own nature, is a communion of society with Belial, a fighting for the devil against God; it is the end of the act, though it be not the intention of the agent. Every sin is the devil's work, and therefore the choice of it is a preferring his service before God's. The sin of Saul, though in a small matter, and not in any natural, but positive command, is equalled to the sin of witchcraft, which, you know, is a covenanting with the devil to yield obedience to him, 1 Sam. xv. 23.

What a monstrous baseness is this, to advance an impure spirit in the place of infinite purity; to embrace the great ring-leader of rebellion, above the Contriver of our reconciliation; the only enemy God hath in the world, who drew all the rest into the faction against him, before him who is ready to pardon us upon our revolt from his adversary! To affect that destroyer above our preserver and benefactor; to esteem him as the exactest pattern and the greatest lord, as though he had created us, provided for us, and in mercy watched over all our days!

What a prodigious enmity is this, to offend God, to pleasure the devil, and injure our Creator, to gratify our adversary! Have we nothing to prefer before him, but

the deadliest enemy that both God and our souls have in the world? Must we side with our tormentor against our Preserver? Shall he which will fire us for ever, be valued above him, who would wipe all tears from our eyes? Oh! let us blush, if any spark of ingenuity be left; and let our hatred of God change its object, and boil up against ourselves for our abominable ingratitude. CHARNOCK.

### *Unwillingness of the Natural Man to know God.*

IN recounting so many influences that operate on man, it is grievous to observe that the incomparably noblest of all, religion, is counteracted with a fatal success, by a perpetual conspiracy of almost all the rest, aided by the intrinsic predisposition of our nature, which yields itself with such consenting facility to every impression tending to estrange it still further from God.

It is a cause for wonder and sorrow, to see millions of rational creatures growing into their permanent habits, under the conforming efficacy of every thing which they ought to resist, and receiving no part of those habits from impressions of the Supreme Object. They are content that a narrow scene of a diminutive world, with its atoms and evils, should usurp, and deprave, and finish their education for immortality, while the Infinite Spirit is here, whose transforming companionship would exalt them into his sons, and, in defiance of a thousand malignant forces attempting to stamp on them an opposite image, lead them into eternity in his likeness. Oh! why is it so possible that this greatest Inhabitant of every place where men are living, should be the last whose society they seek, or of whose being constantly near them they feel the importance? Why is it possible to be surrounded with the intelligent Reality, which exists wherever we are, with attributes that are infinite, and not feel respecting all other things which may be attempting to impress on our minds and affect their character, as if they retained with difficulty their shadows of existence, and were continually on the point of vanishing into nothing? Why is this stupendous Intelligence so retired and silent, while present, over all the scenes of the earth, and in all the paths and abodes of men? Why does he keep his glory invisible behind the shades and

visions of the material world? Why does not this latent glory sometimes beam forth with such a manifestation as could never be forgotten, nor ever be remembered, without an emotion of religious fear? And why, in contempt of all that he has displayed to excite either fear or love, is it still possible for a rational creature so to live, that it must finally come to an interview with him in a character completed by the full assemblage of those acquisitions which have separately been disapproved by him through every stage of the accumulation? Why is it possible for feeble creatures to maintain their little dependent beings fortified and invincible in sin, amidst the presence of divine purity? Why does not the thought of such a Being strike through the mind with such intense antipathy to evil, as to blast with death every active principle that is beginning to pervert it, and render gradual additions of depravity, growing into the solidity of habit, as impossible as for perishable materials to be raised into structures amidst the fires of the last day? How is it possible to forget the solicitude which should accompany the consciousness that such a Being is continually darting upon us the beams of observant thought, (if we may apply such a term to Omniscience,) that we are exposed to the piercing inspection, compared to which the concentrated attention of all the beings in the universe besides, would be but as the powerless gaze of an infant? Why is faith, that faculty of spiritual apprehension, so absent, or so incomparably more slow and reluctant to receive a just perception of the grandest of its objects, than the senses are adapted to receive the impressions of theirs? While there is a Spirit pervading the universe with an infinite energy of being, why have the few particles of dust which enclose our spirits, the power to intercept all sensible communication with it, and to place them as in a vacuity, where the sacred Essence had been precluded or extinguished?

FOSTER.

*Expostulation with him who forgets God.*

THROUGH what defect or infatuation of mind have you been able, during so many years spent in the presence of a God, to continue even to this hour as clear of all marks and traces of any divine influences having operated on you, as if the Deity were but a poetical fiction, or an idol in

some temple of Asia? Evidently, as the immediate cause, through want of thought concerning him.

And why did you not think of him? Did a most solemn thought of him never *once* penetrate your soul, while admitting the proposition that there is such a Being? If it never did, what is reason, what is mind, what is man? If it did once, how could its effects stop there? How could a deep thought, on so singular and momentous a subject, fail to impose on the mind a permanent necessity of frequently recalling it; as some awful or magnificent spectacle will haunt you with a long recurrence of its image, even if the spectacle itself were seen no more?

Why did you not think of him? How could you estimate so meanly your mind with all its capacities, as to feel no regret that an endless series of trifles should seize, and occupy as their right, all your thoughts, and deny them both the liberty and the ambition of going on to the greatest Object? How, while called to the contemplations which absorb the spirits of heaven, could you be so patient of the task of counting the flies of a summer's day?

Why did you not think of him? You knew yourself to be in the hands of some Being from whose power you could not be withdrawn; was it not an equal defect of curiosity and prudence to indulge a careless confidence, that sought no acquaintance with his nature and his dispositions, nor ever anxiously inquired what conduct should be observed toward him, and what expectations might be entertained from him? You would have been alarmed to have felt yourself in the power of a mysterious stranger, of your own feeble species; but let the stranger be omnipotent, and you cared no more.

Why did you not think of him? One would deem that the thought of him must, to a serious mind, come second to almost every thought. The thought of virtue would suggest the thought of both a Lawgiver and a Rewarder; the thought of crime, of an Avenger; the thought of sorrow, of a Consoler; the thought of an inscrutable mystery, of an Intelligence that understands it; the thought of that ever-moving activity which prevails in the system of the universe, of a Supreme Agent; the thought of the human family, of a great Father; the thought of all being, of a Creator; the



thought of life, of a Preserver; and the thought of death, of an uncontrollable Disposer. By what dexterity, therefore, of irreligious caution, did you avoid precisely every track where the idea of him would have met you, or elude that idea if it came? And what must sound reason pronounce of a mind which, in the train of millions of thoughts, has wandered to all things under the sun, to all the permanent objects or vanishing appearances in the creation, but never fixed its thought on the Supreme Reality; never approached, like Moses, *to see this great sight*?

If it were a thing which we might be allowed to imagine, that the Divine Being were to manifest himself in some striking manner to the senses, as by some resplendent appearance at the midnight hour, or by rekindling on an elevated mountain the long extinguished fires of Sinai, and uttering voices from those fires; would he not compel from you an attention which you now refuse? Yes, you will say, he would then seize the mind with irresistible force, and religion would become its most absolute sentiment; but he only presents

himself to faith. Well, and is it a worthy reason for disregarding him, that you *only believe* him to be present and infinitely glorious? Is it the office of faith to veil or annihilate its object? Cannot you reflect that the grandest representation of a spiritual and divine Being to the senses would bear not only no proportion to his glory, but no relation to his nature, and could be adapted only to an inferior dispensation of religion, and to a people who, with the exception of a most extremely small number of men, had been totally untaught to carry their thoughts beyond the objects of sense? Are you not aware that such a representation would considerably tend to restrict you in your contemplation to a defined image, and therefore a most inadequate and subordinate idea of the Divine Being? While the idea admitted by faith, though less immediately striking, is capable of an illimitable expansion, by the addition of all that progressive thought can accumulate, under the continual certainty that all is still infinitely short of the reality.

FOSTER.

## SECTION VI.—NATURE AND EFFECT OF SIN, WITH ITS REMEDY.

### *The True Nature of Sin.*

THE true penitent adds to a just notion of the number of his sins, that of their *enormity*. Here, again, we must remove the prejudices that we have imbibed concerning the morality of Jesus Christ; for here also we have altered his doctrine, and taken the world for our casuist, the maxims of loose worldlings for our supreme law. We have reduced great crimes to a few principal enormous vices, which few people commit. There are but few murderers, but few assassins, but few highway robbers, strictly speaking: other sins, according to us, are frailties incidental to humanity, necessary consequences of human infirmity, and not evidences of a bad heart. But undeceive yourselves, lay aside the morality of the world, take the law of Jesus Christ for your judge, and consider the nature of things in their true point of light. For example, what can be more opposite to the genius of Christianity than that spirit of pride, which reigns over almost all of us, which disguises us from ourselves,

which clothes us with, I know not what, phantom of grandeur, and self-importance, and which persuades us, that a little money, a distant relation to a noble family, a little genius, a little countenance and applause, entitle us to an elevation above the rest of mankind, and to the fantastic privilege of considering ourselves as men made of a mould different from that of the rest of mankind? What can be more criminal than those calumnies, and slanderous falsehoods which infect the greatest part of our conversations; to maintain which, we pretend to penetrate the most hidden recesses of a neighbour's heart, we publish his real faults, we impute others to him, of which he is perfectly innocent, we derive our happiness from his misery, and build our glory on his shame? What more execrable than habitual swearing and profaning the name of Almighty God? Is it not shocking to hear some, who profess Christianity, daily profane religion, revile its institution, blaspheme their Creator for an unfavourable cast of a die, or a turn of a card? In general, can any thing be more

injurious to Jesus Christ than that attachment which most of us have to the world, although in different degrees? What more fully proves our light estimation of his promises, our little confidence in his faithfulness? My brethren, we tremble when we hear of a wretch whom hunger had driven to commit a robbery on the highway; or of a man mad with passion, who in a transport of wrath had killed his brother! But, would we enter into our own hearts, would we take the pains to examine the nature of our own sins, we should soon find ourselves so black and hideous, that the distance, which partial self-love puts between us and the men, at whom we tremble, would diminish and disappear.

SAURIN.

As the power of sin is revealed only in the Scriptures, so the nature of it is best understood from thence. And though the writings of the Apostles give us few definitions, yet we may find even in them a proper definition of sin. *Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law*, saith St. John, and then rendereth this reason of that universal assertion, *for sin is the transgression of the law*, 1 John iii. 4; which is an argument drawn from the definition of sin; for he saith not, *Every sin is the transgression of the law*, which had been necessary, if he had spoken by way of proposition only, to have proved the universality of his assertion, but produceth it indefinitely, *sin is the transgression of the law*; which is sufficient, speaking it by way of definition. And it is elsewhere most evident that every sin is something prohibited by some law, and deviating from the same. For the Apostle affirming, that *the law worketh wrath*; that is, a punishment from God, giveth this as a reason or proof of his affirmation, *for where no law is, there is no transgression*, Rom. iv. 15. The law of God is the rule of the actions of men, and any aberration from that rule is sin: the law of God is pure, and whatsoever is contrary to that law is impure. Whatsoever therefore is done by man, or is in man, having any contrariety or opposition to the law of God, is sin. Every action, every word, every thought, against the law, is a sin of commission, as it is terminated to an object dissonant from, and contrary to, the prohibition of the law, or a negative precept. Every omission of

a duty required of us is a sin, as being contrary to the commanding part of the law, or an affirmative precept. Every evil habit contracted in the soul of man by actions committed against the law of God, is a sin constituting a man truly a sinner, even then when he actually sinneth not. Any corruption and inclination in the soul, to do that which God forbiddeth, and to omit that which God commandeth, howsoever such corruption and evil inclination came into that soul, whether by an act of his own will, or by an act of the will of another, is a sin, as being something dissonant and repugnant to the law of God. And this I conceive sufficient to declare the nature of sin. BP. PEARSON.

### *Enmity to God the root of Sin.*

WHAT is the reason men row against the stream of their own consciences? What is the reason men of sublimated reason, and clear natural wisdom, are voluntary slaves to their own lusts, which they serve with as delightful, as disgraceful a drudgery, against the light of their own minds? It is from this contrariety to God, seated in their very nature, they could never else so earnestly, so cheerfully do the devil's work before God's. They could never else be deaf to the loud voice of God, and have their ears open to the least whisper of Satan. Whence proceeds our stupidity, the folly of our thoughts, the levity of our minds, the deadness of our affections, the sleepiness of our souls, our inexcusable carelessness in holy duties, more than any thing of a temporal concern, but from this aversion from God? It is this enmity dulls our heart in any service. Though conscience which is in us, to keep up the interest of God's law, spurs us on to duty, yet sin that is within us, that keeps up the quarrel against Heaven, hinders us from it, or diverts us in it.

CHARNOCK.

### *The Evil and Malignity of Sin.*

SEE here what an accursed thing sin is, that carries wrapped up in its bowels woe, wrath, and eternal death. To this it is that you owe all the miseries you have already felt; and to this are due all that God hath threatened to inflict hereafter. The law is not to be condemned for condemning the transgressors of it; the justice of God is not to be censured for taking the forfeiture of our lives and souls; but

all our misery is to be charged upon ourselves, upon our corrupt natures, and our sinful lives. We ourselves breed those vipers that gnaw out our very bowels: and as putrefied bodies breed those filthy worms and insects which devour them, so do we breed those filthy lusts in our hearts which are continually preying upon our vitals, and will at last fatally destroy us. As God is an holy God, so he infinitely hates sin; and as he is a just God, so he will assuredly punish it: not a soul of man shall escape; not a sin be passed by without having its due curse; yea, we find God so hates sin, that when he found but the imputation of it upon his own Son, divine vengeance would not suffer him to escape, but loads him with sorrow, and fills his soul with darkness and agonies, nails him to the cross, and there exacts from him a dreadful recompense, which he was fain to make good to the utmost demand of his Father's justice before he could be discharged. One drop of this poison being let fall upon the once glorious angels, turned them into devils, made all their rays of light and lustre fall off from them; and being once tainted with this venom, God could no longer endure them in his presence, but hurls them down all flaming into hell. It is sin that is the fuel of those unquenchable flames, and lays in all those stores of fire and brimstone, which shall there burn for ever. It is a sin that disorbed man of his innocence, turned him out of paradise, and will certainly, if not repented of and forsaken, turn him into hell. And therefore as ye love God, or your own souls, be sure that ye hate iniquity; entertain not any kind thoughts of it, however it tempt and solicit you. Remember the curse of God is affixed inseparably unto it; and if you will suffer the accursed thing to cleave unto you, you must for ever be accursed with it.

BP. HOPKINS.

So foul and horrid is a mortal sin in its own nature, that though it passed only in thought, and none knew it but God, and he who committed it, and which endured no longer than an instant, yet it deserves the torments of hell for all eternity: for by how much greater is the majesty of God, which is despised, by so much greater is the injury offered him; and therefore as the majesty of God, which is despised by sin, is infinite, so the despite of it

must contain, in itself, a certain kind of infinity; by how much greater is the reverence due to a person, by so much greater is the disrespect and affront offered him. And as to God there is due an infinite reverence, so the injury done him is of an inexplicable malice, which by no good works of a mere creature, how many and great soever, can be expiated. So great is the malignity of a mortal sin, that, being put into the balance of Divine Justice, it would outweigh all the good works of all the saints, although they were a thousand times more and greater than they are; because the good works with which God is honoured by his saints, although in themselves great in value, yet in respect of God, unto whom they add nothing, and who is nothing bettered by them, they are not valuable; unto whose Divine Goodness, not only they, but infinitely more, and greater, are but a debt: but for God to be despised by his creature, who, by infinite titles, is obliged to serve him, and ought to reverence him with an infinite honour, is a thing so highly repugnant to his majesty, that, if God were capable of grief, it would more afflict him than all the pious actions of the saints content him.... This is the reason why it was necessary that God should become man, being the Divine Justice could not be appeased with less than the satisfaction of a Divine Person: let those, therefore, cease to marvel, that a momentary sin should be punished with eternal torments, who see that, for sin, God was made man, and died for man; and certainly, it is a far greater wonder, that God should die for the sin of another, than that man should, for his own sin, suffer an eternal punishment: and if the malice of sin be so exorbitant, that nothing could satisfy for it less than God: it is nothing strange, that that which hath no limit, nor bound in evil, should have no limit in punishment, but should exceed all time, and be eternal. . . .

And as a sin is grievous in its own nature, so it is much enlarged by the circumstances which attend it: let us consider who it is that sins; it is a most vile and wretched man, who presumes to lift up his hands against his Creator: and what is man but a sink of corruption, and, by birth, a slave of the devil? and yet he dares offend his Maker. . . . If such an offence were committed by one man against

another, betwixt whom the difference is not great, being both equal in nature, it were very heinous; what shall it deserve, being committed against God, the Lord and Creator of all, whose immense greatness is infinitely distant from the nature of his creature? O, good God! who is able to express what a sinner doth against thee and himself? He despises thy majesty, razes out thy-law from his heart, contemns thy justice, scorns thy threats, despises thy promises, makes a solemn renunciation of the glory thou hast promised him: and all to bind himself an eternal slave to Satan, desiring rather to please thine enemy than thee, who art his Father, his Friend, and all his good; desiring rather to die eternally, by displeasing thee, than to enjoy heaven for ever, by serving thee.

BP. TAYLOR.

We may discover more clearly *the evil of sin*, which no sacrifice could expiate but the blood of the Son of God. It is true, the internal malignity of sin, abstracted from its dreadful effects, is most worthy of our hatred; for it is in its own nature direct enmity against God, and obscures the glory of all his attributes. It is the violation of his majesty, who is the universal Sovereign of heaven and earth; a contrariety to his holiness, which shines forth in his law; a despising of his goodness, the attractive to obedience; the contempt of his omniscience, which sees every sin when it is committed; the slighting of his terrible justice and power, as if the sinner could secure himself from his indignation; a denial of his truth, as if the threatening were a vain terror to scare men from sin. And all this done voluntarily, to please an irregular, corrupt appetite, by a despicable creature, who absolutely depends upon God for his being and happiness.

These considerations seriously pondered, are most proper to discover the extremity of its evil: but sensible demonstrations are most powerful to convince and affect us: and those are taken from the fearful punishments that are inflicted for sin. Now the torments of hell, which are the just and full recompense of sin, are not sensible till they are inevitable; and temporal judgments cannot fully declare the infinite displeasure of God against the wilful contempt of his authority. But in the sufferings of Christ it is expressed to the utmost.

If justice itself had rent the heavens, and come down in the most visible terror to revenge the rebellions of men, it could never have made stronger impressions upon us than the death of Christ duly considered. The destruction of the world by water, the miraculous burning of Sodom and Gomorrah by showers of fire, and all the other most terrible judgments, do not afford such a sensible instruction of the evil of sin. If we regard the dignity of his person and the depth of his sufferings, he is an unparalleled example of God's indignation for the breach of his holy law; for he that was the Son of God and the Lord of glory, was made a man of sorrows. He endured derision, scourgings, stripes, and at last a cruel and cursed death. The Holy of Holies was crucified between two thieves. By how much the life of Christ was more precious than the lives of all men, by so much in his death doth the wrath of God appear more fully against sin, than it would in the destruction of the whole world of sinners. And his spiritual sufferings infinitely exceeded all his corporeal. The impressions of wrath that were inflicted by God's immediate hand upon his soul, forced from him those strong cries, that moved all the powers of heaven and earth with compassion. If the curtain were drawn aside, and we could look into the chambers of death, where sinners lie down in sorrow for ever, and hear the woful expressions and deep complaints of the damned, with what horror and distraction they speak of their torments, we could not have a fuller testimony of God's infinite displeasure against sin, than in the anguish and agonies of our Redeemer; for whatever his sufferings were in kind, yet in their degree and measure they were equally terrible with those that condemned sinners endure. Now, how is it possible that rational agents should freely, in the open light, for perishing vanities, dare to commit sin? Can they avoid or endure the wrath of an incensed God? If God spared not his Son when he came in the similitude of sinful flesh, how shall sinners who are deeply and universally defiled, escape? Can they fortify themselves against the Supreme Judge? Can they encounter with the fury of the Almighty, the apprehensions of which made the soul of Christ heavy unto death? Have they patience to bear that for ever, which was to Christ, who had the strength of the Deity to support him,

intolerable for a few hours? If it were so with the green tree, what will become of the dry when exposed to the fiery trial? If he that was holy and innocent suffered so dreadfully, what must they expect, who add impenitency to their guilt, and live in the bold commission of sin, without reflection and remorse? What prodigious madness is it to drink iniquity like water, as a harmless thing, when it is a poison so deadly that the least drop of it brings certain ruin! What desperate folly, to have slight apprehensions of that which is attended with the first and second death! Nothing but unreasonable infidelity and inconsideration can make men venturous to provoke the *living God*, who is infinitely sensible of their sins, and who both can and will most terribly punish them for ever.

DR. BATES.

How little do any of us see and feel of the evil of sin! It does not appear to be sin—to be itself. It assumes a different, a more pleasing form. It appears to be something else not so dreadfully bad. Some great sins indeed shock every one; though to an unawakened soul even these do not appear to be what they really are. But when sin is seen in its true light, then the least rising or working of corruption in any way, appears to be *beyond all imagination sinful*: so that the mind is overwhelmed with the vastness of its baseness and guilt. Then the least working of pride is viewed as including in it all the atheistical enmity against God which ever did or shall appear in earth or in hell. Pride is the fruitful womb in which all this enmity has been conceived, the parent that has brought it forth, and the breast that has nourished and given it strength. Did sin appear to be sin, then the least emotion of lust in the heart would be looked upon as comprehending in it all the opposition to God's holy law that has ever appeared in the world by all the open breaches of its commandments. Did sin appear to be sin, in what light should we view a careless neglect of God and disregard to his name, even for one hour of our life, or for the smallest part of that hour? This would appear to us nothing less than practical atheism. To think of him at all without the profoundest reverence, the deepest humility and self-abhorrence, the most ardent love, and a mind most submissive to his sovereign will, would be considered by

us as a contempt to his honour, and a disregard to his holy name. Did sin appear to us as sin, any frame of mind which might betray sinful levity, obduracy, or estrangement from God, would be exceedingly lamented. O what sinners are the best of us every day! The little notice we take of sin is not the smallest of our sins. What sin is it for such sinners not to be filled with the deepest humility, and not to have their hearts melted into mourning and godly sorrow!

Whence proceeds all our ease and security? Not from the peace of God, but in a great measure, with respect to every one of us, from the quietness of a carnal mind. Surely, did sin appear as sin, nothing but a view, by faith, of the all-sufficient merits and satisfaction of Christ, could give us one moment's ease. We could then have no peace without having the grace of Christ within us, in all its infinite sufficiency, as our refuge, our support, our life, our all in all. When we see not the evil of sin, we can live without Christ; but when sin appears as sin, nothing but his grace can bring us any peace or tranquillity of mind. It will not satisfy us, then, merely to talk of Christ; but he must be ours in all his fulness. There is much more false peace and carnal security in the world and in ourselves, than we are apt to imagine. All is so, except what proceeds from a believing view of Christ, in all his sufficiency, as our Saviour, as our all in all;—as our *all* against sin, guilt, and the fear of wrath,—as our *all* in temptations, trials, and difficulties,—as our *all* in prosperity and in adversity,—as our *all* in life and death,—as our *all* in our prayers and in our duties,—as our *all* for the foundation of our faith and hope. Did sin appear as sin, nothing but Christ would suit us; he would be, not something, but *every thing* in our esteem; he would be all in every thing, in every state and condition. We should then, with the Apostle, *count all things but loss and dung, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord*.

But when sin does not appear as sin, we can live hours, days, and weeks, tolerably well without Christ, without feeling much need of him, without exercising any faith on him, or any love towards him; we have nothing that we want him to do for us; no sin to be taken away, no guilt to be removed. Not so, when sin appears

as sin. We cannot then live one moment without him. But is not this evil always present with us? And does it not, at all times and every where, most easily beset us? And what have we to oppose to this present evil, to this besetting sin? Is there any thing, either in heaven or on earth, except the righteousness and strength of the Redeemer? - St. Paul could find nothing else; and therefore his most earnest desire was, *to be found in him*. Alas! alas! what little account have I hitherto made, and still make, of sin, and of the Redeemer, the only deliverer from sin and its consequences! How blind and unfeeling am I respecting these things! Where shall I go to hide myself? In what dust and ashes can I lie low enough? I abhor and loathe myself in every respect. It is strange that the Lord should take any notice of me, or shew me any goodness. He is *God*, and, it seems, will act as *such*.

REV. T. CHARLES.

### *The Indwelling of Sin.*

INDWELLING sin always abides in the soul, and is never absent. The Apostle twice useth that expression, *It dwelleth in me*. There is its constant residence and habitation. If it came upon the soul only at certain seasons, much obedience might be perfectly accomplished in its absence; yea, and as they deal with usurping tyrants whom they intend to thrust out of a city, the gates might be sometimes shut against it, that it might not return; the soul might fortify itself against it. But the soul is its home; there it dwells, and is no wanderer. Wherever you are, whatever you are about, this law of sin is always in you; in the best that you do, and in the worst. Men little consider what a dangerous companion is always at home with them. When they are in company, when alone, by night or by day, all is one, sin is with them. There is a living coal continually in their houses, which, if it be not looked unto, will fire them, and it may be consume them. O the woful security of poor souls! How little do the most of men think of this inbred enemy, that is never from home! How little, for the most part, doth the watchfulness of any professors answer the danger of their state and condition! . . .

It doth so dwell in us, as that it will be present with us in every thing we do! Yea,

oftentimes when with most earnestness we desire to be quit of it, with most violence it will put itself upon us; *When I would do good, evil is present with me*. Would you pray, would you hear, would you give alms, would you meditate, would you be in any duty acting faith on God and love towards him, would you work righteousness, would you resist temptations; this troublesome, perplexing indweller, will still more or less put itself upon you and be present with you, so that you cannot perfectly and completely accomplish the thing that is good, as our Apostle speaks, Romans vii. 18. Sometimes men, by hearkening to their temptations, do stir up, excite, and provoke their lusts; and no wonder if then they find them present and active: but it will be so, when with all our endeavours we labour to be free from them. This law of sin dwells in us, that is, it adheres as a depraved principle unto our minds, in darkness and vanity; unto our affections, in sensuality; unto our wills, in a loathing of, and aversion from, that which is good; and by some, more, or all of these, is continually putting itself upon us, in inclinations, motions, or suggestions to evil, when we would be most gladly quit of it. . . .

It hath a great facility and easiness in the application of itself unto its work. It needs no doors to be opened unto it, it needs no engines to work by. The soul cannot apply itself to any duty of a man, but it must be by the exercise of those faculties wherein this law hath its residence. Is the understanding or the mind to be applied unto any thing? there it is in ignorance, darkness, vanity, folly, madness. Is the will to be engaged? there it is also in spiritual deadness, stubbornness, and the roots of obstinacy. Are the heart and affections to be set on work? there it is in inclinations to the world, and present things, and sensuality, with proneness to all manner of defilements. Hence it is easy for it to insinuate itself into all that we do, and to hinder all that is good, and to further all sin and wickedness. It hath an intimacy, an inwardness with the soul, and therefore, in all that we do, doth easily beset us. It possesseth those very faculties of the soul, whereby we must do what we do, whatever it be, good or evil. . . .

Many there are in the world, who find not this law in them; who, whatever they

have been taught in the world, have not a spiritual sense and experience of the power of indwelling sin, and that because they are wholly under the dominion of it. They find not that there is darkness and folly in their minds, because they are darkness itself, and darkness will discover nothing. They find not deadness and an indisposition in their hearts and wills to God, because they are dead wholly in trespasses and sins. They are at peace with their lusts, by being in bondage unto them. And this is the state of most men in the world, which makes them wofully despise all their eternal concerns. Whence is it that men follow and pursue the world with so much greediness, that they neglect heaven, and life, and immortality for it every day? Whence is it that some pursue their sensuality with delight? they will drink, and revel, and have their sports, let others say what they please. Whence is it that so many live so unprofitably under the Word, that they understand so little of what is spoken unto them, that they practise less of what they understand, and will by no means be stirred up to answer the mind of God in his calls unto them? It is all from this law of sin, and the power of it that rules and bears sway in men, that all these things do proceed; but it is not such persons of whom at present we particularly treat. . . .

Indwelling sin is universal in all of the soul. Would this law of sin have contented itself to have subdued any one faculty of the soul; would it have left any one at liberty, any one affection free from its yoke and bondage, it might possibly have been with more ease opposed or subdued: but when Christ comes with his spiritual power upon the soul to conquer it to himself, he hath no quiet landing-place. He can set foot on no ground, but what he must fight for and conquer. Not the mind, not an affection, not the will, but all is secured against him. And when grace hath made its entrance; yet sin will dwell in all its coasts. Were any thing in the soul at perfect freedom and liberty, there a stand might be made to drive it from all the rest of its holds; but it is universal, and wars in the whole soul. The mind hath its own darkness and vanity to wrestle with; the will its own stubbornness, obstinacy, and perverseness; every affection its own frowardness and

aversion from God, and its sensuality to deal withal; so that one cannot yield relief unto one another as they ought; they have, as it were, their hands full at home. Hence it is that our knowledge is imperfect, our obedience weak, love not unmixed, fear not pure, delight not free and noble.

Da. J. OWEN.

From the time that Adam departed from the Fountain of righteousness, the soul has been entirely infected with sin. He deceives himself grossly, who takes the word *flesh* for the body only, or supposes that the Apostle, in opposing it to the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, meant a single faculty only of the soul. The Apostle himself removes the difficulty entirely, when he informs us, that sin resides not in any single faculty only of the soul, but has spread its mortal infection through all of them, in such a manner as to leave nothing pure and clean, nothing sound and whole, in any of them. The understanding is filled with darkness and blindness, and the heart with perverseness and malice.

Even that faculty of the soul, from which it chiefly derives its excellence and nobility, is not merely wounded, but even so corrupted, that it stands in need not of being healed only, but also of having its nature renewed. Sin has taken possession of the heart and the understanding. The whole man, from the sole of the foot even unto the head, is so overwhelmed with a deluge of corruption, that not a single article of him is free from sin.

CALVIN.

#### *Power of Indwelling Sin in counteracting the graces of the Spirit.*

THERE is that which adds weight to this consideration. God suffers us not to be unmindful of this assistance he hath afforded us, but is continually calling upon us to make use of the means appointed for the attaining of the end proposed. He shews them unto us, as the angel shewed the water-spring to Adam. Commands, exhortations, promises, threatenings, are multiplied to this purpose; see them summed up, Heb. ii. 1. He is continually saying to us, 'Why will you die? Why will you wither and decay? Come to the pastures provided for you, and your souls shall live.' If we see a

lamb run from the fold into the wilderness, we wonder not if it be torn and rent of wild beasts : if we see a sheep leaving its green pastures and water-courses, to abide in dry barren heaths, we count it no marvel, nor inquire farther, if we see him lean and ready to perish. But if we find lambs wounded in the fold, we wonder at the boldness and rage of the beasts of prey; that durst set upon them there. If we see sheep pining in full pastures, we judge them to be diseased and unsound. It is indeed no marvel that poor creatures, who forsake their own mercies, and run away from the pasture and fold of Christ in his ordinances, are rent and torn with divers lusts, and do pine away with hunger and famine. But to see men living under, and enjoying all the means of spiritual thriving, yet to decay, not to be fat and flourishing, but rather daily to pine and wither, this argues some secret powerful distemper, whose poisonous and noxious qualities hinder the virtue and efficacy of the means they enjoy. This is indwelling sin. So wonderfully powerful, so effectually poisonous it is, that it can bring leanness on the souls of men in the midst of all precious means of growth and flourishing. It may well make us tremble to see men living under, and in, the use of the means of the Gospel, preaching, praying, administration of sacraments, and yet grow colder every day than other in zeal for God, more selfish and worldly, even habitually to decline as to the degrees of holiness which they had attained unto. . . :

Such is the greatness of the strength and efficacy of indwelling sin, that it giveth stop or control unto that exceeding greatness of power which is put forth in the Word, in the conviction and reformation of men. We see it by experience, that men are not easily wrought upon by the Word; the most of men can live under the dispensation of it all the days of their lives, and continue as senseless and stupid as the seats they sit upon, or the flint in the rock of stone.

Mighty difficulties and prejudices must be conquered, great strokes must be given to the conscience before this can be brought about. It is as the stopping of a river in his course, and turning his streams another way; the hindering of a stone in his falling downwards, or the turning away of the wild ass, when furiously set to pur-

sue his way, as the prophet speaks, Jer. ii. 24. To turn men from their corrupt ways, sins, and pleasures; to make them pray, fast, hear, and do many things contrary to the principle of flesh, which is secretly predominant in them, willingly and gladly; to cause them to profess Christ and the Gospel, it may be under some trials and reproaches; to give them light to see into sundry mysteries, and gifts for the discharge of sundry duties; to make dead, blind, senseless men to walk, and talk, and do all the outward offices and duties of living and healthy men, with the like attendancies of conviction and reformation, are the effects and products of mighty power and strength. Indeed the power that the Holy Ghost puts forth by the Word, in the staggering and conviction of sinners, in the wakening of their consciences, the enlightening of their minds, the changing of their affections, the awing of their hearts, the reforming of their lives, and compelling them to duties, is inexpressible.

But now, unto all these is there check and control given by indwelling sin. It prevails against this whole work of the Spirit by the Word, with all the advantages of providential dispensations, in afflictions and mercies, wherewith it is attended. When sin is once enraged, all these things become but like the withs and cords wherewith Samson was bound before his head was shaven: cry but to it, *'The Philistines are upon thee'*, there is a subtle, a suitable temptation, now show thy strength and efficacy,' all these things become like tow that hath smelt the fire. Conscience is stifled, reputation in the church of God despised, light supplanted, the impressions of the Word cast off, convictions digested, heaven and hell are despised; sin makes its way through all, and utterly turns the soul from the good and right ways of God. Sometimes it doth this subtly, by imperceptible degrees, taking off all force of former impressions from the Spirit by the Word, sullyng conscience by degrees, hardening the heart, and making sensual the affections by various workings, that the poor back-slider in heart scarce knows what he is doing, until he be come to the very bottom of all impiety, profaneness, and enmity against God. Sometimes falling in conjunction with some vigorous temptation,



it suddenly, and at once, plunges the soul into a course of alienation from God, and the profession of his ways.

DR. J. OWEN.

*Greatness and Danger of the Least Sins.*

As the greatest sin discovered, lamented, and mourned over, by a believer, cannot ruin him; so the least sin indulged, covered, and connived at, will certainly prove the destruction of the sinner. No sin, though ever so small, is tolerated by the pure and perfect law of God. The *commandment is exceeding broad*; not as if it gave men a latitude to walk as they please, but *broad*, that is extending itself to all our words, thoughts, actions, and affections; laying a law upon them all; conniving at no evil in any man, 1 Pet. ii. 1.

And as the word gives no allowance for the least sin, so it is the very nature of sincerity and uprightness, to set the heart against every way of wickedness, *Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24; Job xxxi.*; and especially against that sin which was its darling in the days of its vanity, *Psa. xviii. 23.*

Again; the soul that has had a saving sight of Jesus Christ, and a true discovery of the evil of sin, in the glass both of the law and gospel, can account no sin small. He knows the demerit of the smallest sin is God's eternal wrath, and that not the least sin can be remitted without the shedding and application of the blood of Christ, which blood is of infinite value and price.

God's people know, that little as well as great sins are dangerous, deadly, and destructive in their own nature. A little poison will destroy a man. A man would have thought that Adam's sin was no great matter; yet what dreadful work did it make! Indeed no sin can be little, because the object against whom it is committed, is so great; whence it receives a kind of infirmity in itself; and because the price paid to redeem us from it is so invaluable.

And is the smallest sin ruinous in its own nature? and will it certainly prove the ruin of the soul that hides and covers it? O then let my spirit accomplish a diligent search. Look to it, O my soul, that no sin be indulged by thee. Set these considerations as so many flaming swords in the way of thy carnal delights and lusts.

Let me never say of any sin as Lot did of Zoar, *It is a little one, spare it.* Shall I spare that which cost the blood of Jesus Christ? The Lord would not spare him, when *he made his soul an offering for sin*; neither will he spare me, if I defend and hide it, *Dent. xxix. 20.* If my heart were right and my conversation sound, that lust, whatever it be, that is so favoured by me, would especially be abhorred and hated. Whatever my convictions and reformation have been, yet if there be but one sin retained and delighted in, this keeps the devil's interest in my soul. And though for a time he seems to depart, yet at last he will return with seven worse spirits, and this is the sin that will open the door to him, and deliver up my soul. Lord, let me make thorough work of it; let me cut it off, and pluck it out, though it be as a right hand or eye. Shall I come so near the kingdom of God, and yet stick at a small matter, and lose all for want of one thing? Lord, let me shed the blood of the dearest lust for his sake, who shed his dearest blood for me. FLAVEL.

That trite distinction of sin into mortal and venial, which is so common among the schoolmen, is not only vain and destitute of all support from the word of God, but is indeed very faulty, and, far from being itself venial, well deserves to be exploded as mortal, for that malignant influence which it has upon the morals of men. If the most open danger of the divine displeasure and of eternal death cannot hinder the bold race of men from rushing on headlong to every crime, and breaking all the barriers of duty which God has prescribed them, will it not add great licentiousness to all the crowd and tumult of headstrong desires, when some sins are said to be by their own nature, and in the whole kind of them, free from the condemning sentence of the divine law? But what I here oppose is this—give me the holiest man upon earth, the man who above all others stands at the remotest distance, both in the affections of his mind and in the conduct of his life, from those sins which they acknowledge as mortal, will he not deeply feel his need of daily forgiveness, from the multiplied pollutions of his daily infirmities? He truly accounts no sin little, which is committed against the great and ever-blessed God, nor any

pardon little, which he knows to proceed from his infinite grace. Nor will he promise himself the pardon of the least fault which he indulges; nor will he despair of obtaining a pardon of the greatest for which he is truly penitent. And this is the law of grace.

LEIGHTON.

But we are not, with the schoolmen, to extenuate venial, or pardonable sins. No: even those which are so classed are immense evils, at war with the law of God, and in their own nature mortal—that is, such as would bring upon men the eternal wrath of God, unless, for Christ's sake, they were pardoned to those who are reconciled to God through him.

MELANCTHON.

*It is the artifice of Satan to make Sin appear only a trifle before it is committed.*

It is the artifice of Satan, when he tempts a sinner, to make him believe that sin is only a trifle, and that the mercy of God is inexhaustible; but when he has once gained his end, and the sin is committed, he represents it to the sinner's conscience in different colours.

This the unhappy Judas experienced to his infinite grief, and irreparable loss. To betray Christ, at first seemed to him but as a very slight fault; so that he quickly resolved on it. He thought his Master, out of his abundant good-nature, and uncommon mildness and lenity to great sinners, would soon forgive him; and that as Jesus had escaped through the midst of his enemies more than once, he would easily extricate himself from the danger he was going to involve him in. As to the former supposition, he was confirmed in it, as Jesus had publicly declared, *He that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out or reject.* But Satan having now gained his point, and seduced Judas into sin; he assumes another tone, and represents the affair in a very different light. The sin, which before seemed to Judas a trifle light as air, now oppressed his conscience as an insupportable load; so that he was crushed under the oppressive weight of it. On the other hand, the mercy and lenity of Christ, which he before thought to be without bounds, vanished from his mind; so that he no longer entertained any hopes of

pardon and forgiveness. Thus it is with the careless and secure. They first look on sin as a grain of sand or a mote in the sun, and make no account of it; but afterwards it swells to a gigantic size, even beyond the stretch of their imagination. Satan first allures them with a vain hope of God's mercy, and thereby brings them presumptuously to sin, from an assurance of pardon and forgiveness; but after the sin is committed, he fills them with fears and terrors, by representing to their consciences the divine justice, and those dreadful threatenings which God has thundered against sinners. Happy is the man, who, before he commits sin, thinks on the justice and purity of the Deity, in order to deter him from sinning; but, after he has sinned, reflects on the infinite mercy of God, and by that consideration is preserved from falling into the abyss of despair.

Again, Satan extenuates great and flagrant crimes, by inspiring the sinner with a false and delusive hope.

Judas was puffed up with the vain hope, that Christ would not fail at once to break asunder all the cords with which his enemies would bind him, and by that means escape out of their hands. It is probable that his conscience, at first, made some struggle against the temptation to commit such a horrible crime; but he was at last over-persuaded by this false hope, which at length turned the scale in favour of covetousness, against the dictates of his conscience. This is the case with many thousands of unhappy sinners. Some are led into sin by the impious hope, that their crimes will never come to light, and consequently that they shall escape the punishment which the law inflicts on such crimes. Others are drawn on by a presumptuous hope of obtaining pardon and forgiveness from the divine mercy, which is infinite and inexhaustible. Others again are allured into wickedness by the hopes, that they shall prevent any ill consequences that may follow on their sins; and others by the hopes, that they shall one day repent, and intreat forgiveness of God; that they will be able to repair the faults they shall have committed, by other good works; and by that means to balance their account with Heaven. By these delusive and groundless suppositions, a sinner is induced to commit the most heinous crimes,

and greatest villainies. But when matters turn out afterwards quite contrary to his vain expectations, and he finds himself deceived in his hope, then he acknowledges with grief and confusion, that he never could have thought that this would have been the consequence of his sins; and if he could in the least have imagined it, he would never have ventured to commit them. But let us maturely consider, that when a sin is once committed, it is no longer in our power to prevent the consequences of it. When a stone is once thrown by the hand or sling, we can no longer direct its course by a wish: as little is sin, when once committed, subject to our wishes and directions. Let us therefore turn a deaf ear to the solicitations and blandishments of false hope; for the end of such a delusive hope is despair.

RAMBACH.

*Danger of continuing in Sin because the Lord in mercy forbears.*

It is one of the sad consequences of our depravity, as well as one of the strongest proofs of it, that we are prone to turn every blessing into a curse, and to make our remedy our poison. Not content with mere ingratitude for mercies, we abuse them. Thus the Jews treated the long-suffering of God, and thus are many of us at the present hour treating it. We hear of its riches and we experience its greatness; but instead of employing the hours it gives us in seeking reconciliation with Heaven, we go on adding sin to sin, and increasing the terrors of our future condemnation. Because God is slow to punish, we conclude that he never will punish; that he is unconcerned about our sins; that he either does not notice them, or, if he notices them, that he is too merciful and too mindful of our frailty and infirmities to call us to a strict account for them. The consequence is that we become more fearless and hardened. Instead of forsaking our old sins, we plunge into new transgressions, and make that very patience, which was designed to lead us to repentance, the means of inspiring us with confidence and presumption in our rebellion. *Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil, Eccles. viii. 11.*

No conduct, brethren, can be more base than this, none more dangerous; but there is none more common. There is an awful propensity to it in our very nature. We naturally reason from the past to the future, and we are prone to infer that the dispensations of the Almighty towards us will for ever continue the same as they have hitherto been, that mercy will ever be mingled with judgment, and patience never have an end. It becomes us then to look closely to ourselves; to regard the question in Rom. ii. 4. as addressed to us in particular; to consider the Holy Spirit as singling us out this very hour, and saying to each of us, *Despiseest thou the riches of the Lord's goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering? . . .*

But the time of patience will have an end. Notwithstanding all present appearances to the contrary, there is a day coming in which it will give place to wrath. And this wrath will be aggravated by the mercy which has preceded it. The fact is, that God exercises his long-suffering for his own glory, as well as for our salvation; and though we may lose the advantages, he will not lose the honour of it. When patience has performed her appointed work, she will retire from our sight, and justice will ascend the throne and have a solemn triumph in the final destruction of those who have spurned at mercy. Now the justice of Jehovah magnifies his patience; but then patience abused will magnify his justice, make it more fearful, and invest it with more awful splendours. His backwardness to punish is now causing thousands of his enemies to suspect his purity and greatness; but then the outpouring of his treasured wrath will wipe off the reproach, and force an assembled world to acknowledge the fearfulness of his holiness and the terrors of his majesty. *O consider this, ye that forget God, lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver.* Be thoughtful. Be prayerful. Force your careless souls to reflect, and your stubborn knees to bend. At least be determined to live no longer utterly regardless of the patience, which spares you. Bring it before your mind in the morning, and in the evening meditate on it again, and strive to impress on your soul a sense of its greatness and its design. O let not its inestimable riches be all wasted. Perish not while mercy so great and so free is

waiting to deliver you. Harden not the heart, which the eternal Spirit is so ready to soften; and destroy not the soul, which the everlasting Jesus died to save.

REV. C. BRADLEY.

*Sin is Sin in a Believer as well as in an Unbeliever.*

THIS I say, lest any man should say that after grace is received, there is little account to be made of sin: sin is truly sin, whether a man commit it before he hath received Christ, or after; and God always hateth sin; yea, all sin is damnable, as touching the fact itself, but in that it is not damnable, to him that believeth, it cometh of Christ, who by his death hath taken away sin; but to him that believeth not in Christ, not only all his sins are damnable, but even his good works also are sin; according to that saying, *Whosoever is not of faith, is sin*, Rom. xiv. 23. Therefore the error of the schoolmen is most pernicious, which do distinguish sins according to the fact, and not according to the person; he that believeth has as great sin as the unbeliever, but to him that believeth it is forgiven, and not imputed; to the unbeliever it is not pardoned, but imputed. Not for any difference of sins, or because the sin of the believer is less, and the sin of the unbeliever is greater, but for the difference of the *persons*. For the faithful assureth himself by faith, that his sin is forgiven him, forasmuch as Christ hath given himself for it. Therefore, although he hath sin in him, and daily sinneth, yet he continueth godly; but contrariwise, the unbeliever continueth wicked. And this is the true wisdom and consolation of the godly, that although they have, and commit sins, yet they know that for Christ's sake they are not imputed to them.

LUTHER.

No thanks to sin, if the Lord over-rule it for the good of his people; it is still the abominable thing which his soul hateth; and whatsoever may be his secret will, we are to keep close to the declaration of his own written word, which bids us to resist sin even *unto blood*: whosoever can delight himself in sin, under the persuasion that God will make it work together for his good, is under a most powerful delusion of the devil: such a one is indeed accomplishing God's decree; but he carries a

dreadful mark in his forehead, that such decree is, that he shall be punished with *everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord*. Sin is directly contrary to the new nature of a believer, to that incorruptible seed which remaineth in him, and therefore *he cannot sin, because he is born of God*; that is, the new man, the regenerate part, cannot sin. *It is not I*, says the Apostle, *but sin that dwelleth in me*. Yea, so great an aversation is there between the love of sin and the new creature, that he esteems the position, *Let us sin that grace may abound*, as the most damnable doctrine that ever steamed out of the bottomless pit of hell; and though 'grace and salvation' is all his song, yet he knoweth that *the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, teacheth us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world*.

Sin is sin in a believer as much as in an unbeliever; and wheresoever God sees sin, it cannot but be hateful to the eyes of his purity; but because Christ's righteousness is imputed, therefore sin is not imputed; forasmuch as God never imputeth sin and righteousness unto the same person.

REV. MR. FLETCHER.

*Sin the usual cause of the Believer's want of joy in Religion.*

O LET not that ever be forgotten, which is so plainly said, so commonly known, so familiar to almost every religious ear, yet too little felt by any of our hearts, *Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear*, Isa. lix. 1, 2. And this is, on the whole, a merciful dispensation of God, though it may seem severe; regard it not, therefore, merely as your calamity, but as intended to awaken you, that you may not content yourself, even with lying in tears of humiliation before the Lord, but, like Joshua, rise and exert yourself vigorously, to *put away from you that accursed thing*, whatever it be. . . .

Receive it therefore, on the whole, as the most important advice that can be given you, immediately to enter on a strict examination of your conscience. Attend on its gentlest whispers. If a suspicion arises in your mind, that any thing has not

been right, trace that suspicion, search into every secret folding of your heart; improve, to the purposes of a fuller discovery, the advice of your friends, the reproaches of your enemies; recollect for what your heart hath smitten you at the table of the Lord, for what it would smite you if you were upon a dying bed, and within this hour to enter on eternity. When you have made any discovery, note it down, and go on in your search, till you can say, These are the remaining corruptions of my heart, these are the sins and follies of my life; this have I neglected; this I have done amiss. And when the account is as complete as you can make it, set yourself in the strength of God to a strenuous reformation, or rather begin the reformation of every thing that seems amiss as soon as ever you discover it: *Return to the Almighty, and thou shalt be built up; and put iniquity far from thy tabernacle; then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God. Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee; thou shalt pay thy vows unto him, and his light shall shine upon thy ways,* Job xxii. 23, 26, 27.

DODDRIDGE.

*To neglect the smallest Sin is most dangerous, especially considering the vigilance of Satan.*

THE least enemy being despised and neglected, as men observe, proves often too great. The smallest appearances of evil, the least things that may prejudice our spiritual good, while we make no reckoning of them, may do us great mischief. Our not considering them makes them become considerable, especially being under the command of a vigilant and skilful leader, who knows how to improve advantages. Therefore, in things which we many times account petty, and not worthy our notice as having any evil in them, we should learn to suspect the address of this adversary, who usually hides himself, and couches under some covert, till he may appear irresistible, and seize on us; and then, indeed, he roars. . . .

He studies our nature, and fits his temptations to it; knows the prevalency of lust, or earthliness, or that great and most general evil of pride, so like himself, and that is his throne in the heart. Sometimes, he

boweth down, as it is said of the lion, Psa. x. 9; he waits his opportunity craftily, and then assaults fiercely. And the children of God find sometimes so much violence in his temptations, that they surprise them; such horrid thoughts cast in as poisoned arrows, or *fiery darts*, as the Apostle speaks, Eph. vi. 16. And this his enmity, though it is against man in general, yet is most enraged against the children of God. He goes about and spies where they are weakest, and amongst them, directs his attacks most against those who are most advanced in holiness, and nearest unto God. They were once under his power, and now being escaped from him, he pursues them, as Pharaoh did the Israelites, with all his forces, raging and roaring after them, as a prey that was once in his den, and under his paw, and now is rescued. . . .

Is it not most reasonable hence to press watchfulness? to keep continual watch, to see what comes in, and what goes out; to try what is under every offer of the world, every motion of our own natural hearts, whether there be not some treachery, some secret intelligence or not? Especially after a time of some special seasons of grace, and some special new supplies of grace received in such seasons, (as after the holy sacrament,) then will he set on most eagerly, when he knows of the richest booty. The pirates that let the ships pass as they go by empty, watch them well when they return richly laden: so doth this great Pirate. Did he not assault our Saviour straight after his baptism? *ὁ πειράζειν.* Matt. iv. 3. . . .

And when we have gained some advantage in a conflict, or when the enemy seems to retire and be gone, yet, even then, are we to be watchful, yea, then especially. How many, presuming on false safeties that way, and sitting down to carouse, or lying down to sleep, have been re-assaulted and cut off! Oh, beware when you think yourselves most safe! That very thought makes you least safe. . . .

The spiritual circumspectness and vigilancy of the mind, in a wary, waking posture, is very necessary, that it be not surprised by the assaults or sleights of Satan, by the world, nor by its nearest and most deceiving enemy, the corruption that dwells within, which being so near, doth most readily watch unperceived advan-

tages, and easily circumvent us, Heb. xii. 1. The soul of a Christian being surrounded with enemies, both of so great power and wrath, and so watchful to undo it, should it not be watchful for its own safety, and live in a military vigilance continually, keeping constant watch and sentinel, and suffering nothing to pass that may carry the least suspicion of danger? Should he not be distrustful and jealous of all the motions of his own heart, and the smilings of the world? And in relation to these, it will be a wise course to take that word as a good caveat, *Νῆφε καὶ μέμνησε ἁποστρεῖν. Be watchful, and remember to mistrust.* Under the garment of some harmless pleasure, or some lawful liberties, may be conveyed into thy soul some thief or traitor, that will either betray thee to the enemy, or at least pilfer and steal of the most precious things thou hast. Do we not by experience find, how easily our foolish hearts are seduced and deceived, and therefore apt to deceive themselves? And by things that seem to have no evil in them, they are yet drawn from the height of affection to their Supreme Good, and from communion with God, and study to please Him; which should not be intermitted, for then it will abate, whereas it ought still to be growing.

LEIGHTON.

In this unsearchable heart dwells the law of sin, and much of its security, and consequently of its strength, lies in this, that it is past our finding out. We fight with an enemy whose secret strength we cannot discover, whom we cannot follow into its retirements. Hence oftentimes, when we are ready to think sin quite ruined, after awhile we find it was but out of sight. It hath coverts and retreats in an unsearchable heart, whither we cannot pursue it. The soul may persuade itself all is well, when sin may be safe in the hidden darkness of the mind, which it is impossible that he should look into; for whatever makes manifest is light. It may suppose the will of sinning is utterly taken away, when yet there is an unsearchable reserve for a more suitable object, a more vigorous temptation, than at present it is tried withal. Hath a man had a contest with any lust, and a blessed victory over it by the Holy Ghost, as to that present trial? when he thinks it is utterly ex-

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pelled, he ere long finds that it was but retired out of sight. It can lie so close in the mind's darkness, in the will's indisposition, in the disorder and carnality of the affections, that no eye can discover it. The best of our wisdom is but to watch its first appearances, to catch its first under-earth heavings and workings, and to set ourselves in opposition to them; for to follow it into the secret corners of the heart, that we cannot do.

It is true, there is yet a relief in this case, namely, that he to whom the work of destroying the law of sin and body of death in us is principally committed, namely, the Holy Ghost, comes with his axe to the very root; neither is there any thing in an unsearchable heart that is not open and naked unto him, Heb. iv. 12; but we in a way of duty may hence see what an enemy we have to deal withal.

DR. J. OWEN.

*Our warfare against the treacheries of Sin and the World ends only with our life.*

ARM yourselves. There is still fighting, and sin will be molesting you; though wounded to death, yet will it struggle for life, and seek to wound its enemy; it will assault the graces that are in you. Do not think, if it be once struck, and you have given it a stab near to the heart, by the *sword of the Spirit*, that therefore it will stir no more. No, so long as you live in the flesh, in these bowels there will be remainders of the life of this flesh, your natural corruption; therefore ye must be armed against it. Sin will not give you rest, so long as there is a drop of blood in its veins, one spark of life in it; and that will be as long as you have life here. This old man is stout, and will fight himself to death; and at the weakest it will rouse up itself, and exert its dying spirits, as men will do sometimes more eagerly than when they were not so weak, nor so near death.

This the children of God often find to their grief, that corruptions which they thought had been cold dead, stir and rise up again, and set upon them. A passion or lust, that after some great stroke, lay a long while as dead, stirred not, and therefore they thought to have heard no more of it, though it shall never recover fully again, to be lively as before, yet will

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revive in such a measure as to molest, and possibly to foil them yet again. Therefore is it continually necessary that they live in arms, and put them not off to their dying day; till they put off the body, and be altogether free of the flesh. You may take the Lord's promise for victory in the end; that shall not fail; but do not promise yourself ease in the way, for that will not hold. If at some times you be undermost, give not all for lost: he hath often won the day, who hath been foiled and wounded in the fight. But likewise take not all for won, so as to have no more conflict, when sometimes you have the better, as in particular battles. Be not desperate when you lose, nor secure when you gain them: when it is worst with you, do not throw away your arms, nor lay them away when you are at best.

LEIGHTON.

Who can mention the treacheries and deceits that lie in the heart of man? It is not for nothing that the Holy Ghost so expresseth it, *it is deceitful above all things!* uncertain in what it doth, and false in what it promiseth. And hence moreover it is, amongst other causes, that in the pursuit of our war against sin, we have not only the old work to go over and over, but new work still while we live in this world; still new stratagems and wiles to deal withal, as the manner will be where unsearchableness and deceitfulness are to be contended with.

Never then let us reckon that our work in contending against sin, in crucifying, mortifying, and subduing of it, is at an end. The place of its habitation is unsearchable; and when we may think that we have thoroughly won the field, there is still some reserve remaining that we saw not, that we knew not of. Many conquerors have been ruined by their carelessness after a victory; and many have been spiritually wounded after great successes against this enemy. David was so. His great surprisal into sin was after a long profession, manifold experiences of God, and watchful keeping himself from his iniquity. And hence in part hath it come to pass, that the profession of many hath declined in their old age or riper time. They have given over the work of mortifying of sin, before their work was at an end. There is no way for us to pursue sin in its unsearchable habitation, but by being

endless in our pursuit. And that command of the Apostle which we have, Col. iii. 5, on this account is as necessary for them to observe, who are towards the end of their race, as those that are but at the beginning of it; *Mortify therefore your members that are on the earth;* be always doing it whilst you live in this world. It is true, great ground is obtained, when the work is vigorously and constantly carried on; sin is much weakened, so that the soul presseth forwards towards perfection. But yet the work must be endless whilst we are in this world. If we give over, we shall quickly see this enemy exerting itself with new strength and vigour.

Commit then the whole matter with all care and diligence unto him who can search the heart to the uttermost, and knows how to prevent all its treacheries and deceits. Here lies our safety. There is no treacherous corner in our hearts, but he can search it to the uttermost; there is no deceit in them, but he can disappoint it. This course David takes, Psalm cxxxix. After he had set forth the omnipresence of God, and his omniscience, v. 8-10, he makes improvement of it, v. 23; *Search me, O Lord, and try me.* As if he had said, 'It is but a little that I know of my deceitful heart, only I would be sincere, I would not have reserves for sin retained therein; wherefore do thou, who art present with my heart, who knowest my thoughts long before, undertake this work, perform it thoroughly, for thou alone art able so to do.'

DR. J. OWEN.

*Men may be slaves to Sin though exempt from foul Impieties.*

MEN who are some way exempted from the blot of foul impieties, may still remain slaves to sin, alive to it, and dead to God, living to the lusts of men, and not to the will of God, pleasing others and themselves, and displeasing him. And the smoothest, best bred, and most moralised natural man, is in this base thralldom; and he is the more miserable, in that he dreams of liberty in the midst of his chains, thinks himself clean by looking on those that wallow in gross profaneness; takes measure of himself by the most crooked lives of ungodly men about him, and so thinks himself very straight; but lays not the straight rule of the will of God to his ways

and heart, which if he did, he would then discover much crookedness in his ways, and much more in his heart, that now he sees not, but takes it to be square and even.

Therefore I advise and desire you to look more narrowly to yourselves in this, and see whether you be not still living to your own lusts and wills instead of to God, seeking, in all your ways, to advance and please yourselves, and not him. Is not the bent of your hearts set that way? Do not your whole desires and endeavours run in that channel, how you and yours may be somebody, and how you may have wherewithal to serve the flesh, and to be accounted of and respected amongst men? And if we trace it home, all a man's honouring and pleasing of others tends to, and ends in; pleasing of himself: it resolves into that. And is it not so meant by him? He pleases men, either that he may gain by them, or be respected by them, or that something that is still pleasing to himself may be the return of it. So, self is the grand idol, for which all other heart-idolatries are committed; and, indeed, in the unrenewed heart there is no scarcity of them. Oh! what multitudes, what heaps, if the wall were digged through, and the light of God going before us, and leading us in to see them! Ezek. viii. 8. The natural motion and way of the natural heart, is no other than still seeking out new inventions, a forge of new gods, still either forming them to itself, or worshipping those it hath already framed; committing spiritual fornication from God, with the creature, and multiplying lovers every where, as it is tempted; as the Lord complains of his people, *upon every high hill, and under every green tree*, Jer. ii. 20; iii. 6.

You will not believe so much ill of yourselves, will not be convinced of this unpleasant but necessary truth; and this is a part of our self-pleasing, that we please ourselves in this, that we will not see it, either in our callings and ordinary ways, or in our religious exercises. For even in these, we naturally aim at nothing but ourselves; either our reputation, or, at best, our own safety and peace; either to stop the cry of conscience for the present, or to escape the wrath that is to come; but not in a spiritual regard of the will of God, and out of pure love to himself for him-

self: yet, thus it should be, and that love, the divine fire in all our sacrifices. The carnal mind is in the dark, and sees not its vileness in living to itself, will not confess it to be so. But when God comes into the soul, he lets it see itself, and all its idols and idolatries, and forces it to abhor and loathe itself for all its abominations; and having discovered its filthiness to itself, then he purges and cleanses it for himself, *from all its filthiness, and from all its idols*, Ezek. xxxvi. 25, according to his promise, and comes in and takes possession of it for himself, enthrones himself in the heart. And it is never right nor happy till that be done.

LEIGHTON.

*Men, though restrained from Sin by the presence of a child, yet regard not the presence of God.*

WHOSOEVER thou art, that professest thyself a Christian, thou believest that God, whom thou servest, is present every where, both in heaven and earth, insomuch, that it is altogether impossible for thee to exclude him from thy company; where-soever thou goest, he will pursue thee; though thou should clothe thyself with darkness as it were with a garment, the darkness would be to him as the noon-day; and though it were possible for thee to deceive the eyes and observation of men and angels, yea, even of thine own conscience, yet to him thou wouldst be open and transparent, *γυμνὸς καὶ τετραχλισμένος*, as it were, dissected, and having the very entrails exposed to his sight.

Thou canst hide therefore nothing which thou doest from his eyes; he taketh notice of every word which thou speakest; he hears even the very whispering of thy thoughts; and all this thou sayest thou acknowledgedst. Out of thy own mouth shalt thou be condemned, thou wicked servant: dardest thou then make thy master a witness of thy rebellion and disobedience? When thou art about the fulfilling of any of thine ungodly lusts, thou retirest thyself from company, and art afraid of the faces of men; thou abhorrest the light, and yet dardest outface him whose eyes are ten thousand times brighter than the sun. Thou wouldst not have the confidence to commit filthiness, if thy friend were in company; and yet, what injury is done to him by it? What



commandment of his dost thou transgress in it? Or, if thou didst, what power or authority has he over thee to punish thee? Thou wouldst be ashamed to commit such a sin, if thy servant were by, one whom thou art so far from being afraid of, that himself, his words, almost his very thoughts, are in thy power: nay, if a child were in company, thou wouldst not have the face to do it.

Thou canst not deny, but respect to a friend, to a servant, even to a child, will withhold thee from such practices; and yet withal confessest that Almighty God, whom thou professest to serve, to fear, and to love, that he all the while looks upon thee, and observes thee; his eyes are never removed from thee, and, which is worse, though thou mayest endeavour to forget and blot such actions out of thy remembrance, yet it is impossible he should ever forget them; he keeps a register of all thy sins, which no time shall ever be able to deface: and what will it then profit thee to live a close concealed sinner from the world, or to gain amongst men the reputation of a devout religious Christian, when in the mean time thine own heart and conscience shall condemn thee; nay, when Almighty God, *who is greater than thy heart, and knoweth all things*, when he shall be able to object unto thee all thy close ungodly projects, all thy bosom private lusts? Yea, when that conceit (wherein thou didst so much please thyself) of being able to delude and blind the observation of the world, shall nothing avail thee; but whatsoever mischiefs thou hast contrived, whatsoever abominations thou hast practised, all these, with each aggravating circumstance, shall be discovered in the presence of all men, and angels, and devils; when Satan, whom before thou madest an instrument unto thy lusts, to whose counsels and suggestions thou before wouldst only hearken, shall be the most forward and eager to impeach thee.

CHILLINGWORTH.

*If the Righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?*

It is true, then, that they are *scarcely saved*; even they who endeavour to walk uprightly in the ways of God, that is, *the righteous*, they are *scarcely saved*. This imports not any uncertainty or hazard in

the thing itself as to the end, in respect of the purpose and performance of God, but only, the great difficulties and hard encounters in the way; that they go through so many temptations and tribulations, so many *fightings without and fears within*. The Christian is so simple and weak, and his enemies are so crafty and powerful, the oppositions of the wicked world their hatreds, and scorns, and molestations, the sleights and violence of Satan, and, worst of all, the strength of his own corruptions; and by reason of abounding corruption, there is such frequent, almost continual, need of purifying by afflictions and trials, that he has need to be still under physic, and is of necessity at some times drained and brought so low that there is scarcely strength or life remaining in him.

And, truly, all outward difficulties would be but matter of ease, would be as nothing, were it not for the incumbrance of lusts, and corruptions within. Were a man to meet disgraces and sufferings for Christ, how easily would he go through them, yea, and rejoice in them, were he rid of the fretting impatience, the pride, and self-love, of his own carnal heart! These clog and trouble him worst, and he cannot shake them off, nor prevail against them without much pains, many prayers and tears; and many times, after much wrestling, he scarcely finds that he hath gained any ground: yea, sometimes he is foiled and cast down by them.

And so, in all other duties, such a fighting and continual combat, with a revolting, backsliding heart, the flesh still pulling and dragging downwards! When he would mount up, he finds himself as a bird with a stone tied to its foot; he hath wings that flutter to be upwards, but is pressed down with the weight fastened to him. What struggling with wanderings and deadness in hearing, and reading, and prayer! And what is most grievous, is, that, by their unwary walking, and the prevailing of some corruption, they grieve the Spirit of God, and provoke him to hide his face, and withdraw his comforts. How much pain to attain any thing, any particular grace of humility, or meekness, or self-denial; and if any thing be attained, how hard to keep and maintain it against the contrary party! How often are they driven back to their old point! If they do but cease from striving a little, they are carried

back by the stream. And what returns of doubtings and misbelief, after they thought they were got somewhat above them, inso-much that sometimes they are at the point of giving over, and thinking it will never be for them. And yet, through all these they are brought safe home. There is another strength than theirs, which bears them up, and brings them through. But these things, and many more of this nature, argue the difficulty of their course, and that it is not so easy a thing to come to heaven as most imagine it.

Thou that findest so little stop and conflict in it, who goest thy round of external duties, and all is well, art no more troubled; thou hast need to inquire, after a long time spent in this way, am I right? Have I not yet to begin? Surely, this looks not like the way to heaven, as it is described in the Scripture: it is too smooth and easy to be right.

And if the way of the righteous be so hard, then how hard shall be the end of the ungodly sinner that walks in sin with delight! It were strange if they should be at such pains, and with great difficulty attain their end, and he should come in amongst them in the end; they were fools indeed. True, if it were so. But what if it be not so? Then the wicked man is the fool, and shall find that he is, when he shall not be able to *stand in the judgment*. Where shall he appear, when to the end he might not appear, he would be glad to be smothered under the weight of the hills and mountains, if they could shelter him from appearing?

And what is the aim of all this which we have spoken, or can speak, on this subject, but that ye may be moved to take into deeper thoughts the concernment of your immortal souls? Oh, that you would be persuaded! Oh, that you would betake yourselves to Jesus Christ, and seek salvation in him! Seek to be covered with his righteousness, and to be led by his Spirit in the ways of righteousness. That will seal to you the happy certainty of the end, and overcome for you all the difficulties of the way. What is the Gospel of Christ preached for? What was the blood of Christ shed for? Was it not, that by receiving him, we might escape condemnation? Nay, this drew him from heaven: *He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly*, John x. 10.

LEIGHTON.

### *How to detect the deceitfulness of Sin.*

HERE we may give some few directions for the obviating of this woful work of the deceitfulness of sin. Would we not be enticed or entangled, would we not be disposed to the conception of sin, would we be turned out of the road and way which goes down to death, let us take heed of our affections, which are of so great concernment in the whole course of our obedience, that they are commonly in the Scripture called by the name of the heart, as the principal thing which God requires in our walking before him. And this is not to be attended unto slightly. Prov. iv. 23, saith the wise man, *Keep thy heart with diligence*, or, as in the original, *above or before all keepings*. *Before every watch keep thy heart*. You have many keepings that you watch unto; you watch to keep your lives, to keep your estates, to keep your reputations, to keep up your families; but, saith he, above all these keepings, prefer that, attend to that of the heart, of your affections, that they be not entangled with sin; there is no safety without it. Save all other things and lose the heart, and all is lost, lost unto all eternity. You will say then, 'What shall we do, or how shall we observe this duty?'

#### 1. *Keep your affections as to their object.*

*First; In general.* This advice the Apostle gives in this very case, Col. iii. His advice in the beginning of that chapter is to direct us unto the mortification of sin, which he expressly engageth in ver. 5. *Mortify therefore your members which are on the earth*. Prevent the working and deceit of sin, which wars in your members. To prepare us, to enable us hereunto, he gives us that great direction, ver. 2, *Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth*. Fix your affections upon heavenly things; this will enable you to mortify sin; fill them with the things that are above; let them be exercised with them, and so enjoy the chiefest place in them. They are above, blessed and suitable objects, meet for, and answering unto, our affections. God himself, in his beauty and glory; the Lord Jesus Christ, who is *altogether lovely, the chiefest of ten thousand*; grace and glory; the mysteries revealed in the Gospel; the blessedness promised thereby.

Were our affections filled, taken up, and possessed with these things, as it is our duty that they should be, it is our happiness when they are, what access could sin with its painted pleasures, with its sugared poisons, with its venomous baits, have unto our souls? how should we loath all its proposals, and say unto them, Get ye hence as an abominable thing? For what are the vain transitory pleasures of sin, in comparison of the exceeding recompense of reward which is proposed unto us? Which argument the Apostle presses, 2 Cor. iv. 18.

*Secondly*; as to the object of your affections in an especial manner; let it be the cross of Christ, which hath exceeding efficacy towards the disappointment of the whole work of indwelling sin. *God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, whereby the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world*, Gal. vi. 14. The cross of Christ he gloried and rejoiced in; this his heart was set upon, and these were the effects of it; *it crucified the world unto him*, made it a dead and undesirable thing. The baits and pleasures of sin are taken all of them out of the world, and the things that are in the world, namely, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life*. These are the things that are in the world; from these doth sin take all its baits, whereby it enticeth and entangleth our souls. If the heart be filled with the cross of Christ, it casts death and undesirableness upon them all, it leaves no seeming beauty, no appearing pleasure or comeliness in them. Again, saith he, *it crucifieth me to the world*: makes my heart, my affections, my desires dead unto any of these things. It roots up corrupt lusts and affections, leaves no principle to go forth and make provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof. Labour, therefore, to fill your hearts with the cross of Christ. Consider the sorrows he underwent, the curse he bore, the blood he shed, the cries he put forth, the love that was in all this to your souls, and the mystery of the grace of God therein. Meditate on the vileness, the demerit, and punishment of sin, as represented in the cross, the blood, the death of Christ. Is Christ crucified for sin, and shall not our hearts be crucified with him unto sin? shall we give entertainment unto that, or hearken unto its dalliances, which wounded, which pierced, which slew our

dear Lord Jesus? God forbid! Fill your affections with the cross of Christ, that there may be no room for sin. The world once put him out of the house into a stable, when he came to save us; let him now turn the world out of our hearts, when he is come to sanctify us.

2. *Look to the vigour of the affections towards heavenly things*. If they are not constantly attended, excited, directed, and warned, they are apt to decay, and sin lies in wait to take every advantage against them. Many complaints we have in the Scripture of those who lost their first love, in suffering their affections to decay. And this should make us jealous over our own hearts, lest we also should be overtaken with the like backsliding frame. Wherefore be jealous over them; often strictly examine them, and call them to account; supply unto them due considerations for their exciting and stirring up unto duty.

DR. J. OWEN.

#### *Victory promised in all our contests with Sin and Satan.*

WE have a further ground for our expectation of victory in all contests with sin and Satan, from the powerful assistance of God himself, who is never wanting to those that seek after him, and never fails those that engage in his quarrels. While we strive against sin, we may safely expect that the Divinity itself will strive with us, and derive that strength and power into us that shall at last make us *more than conquerors*. God hath not forsaken the earth: but as his Almighty Essence runs through all things, sustaining and upholding the frame of the whole universe; so more especially does it bear up in its almighty arms those things that are more nearly related to himself, always cherishing them with his own goodness. Wheresoever God beholds any breathings after himself, he gives life to them, as those which are his own breath in them. As he who projects wickedness shall be sure to find Satan standing at his right hand ready to assist him in it; so he that pursues after God and holiness shall find God nearer to him than he is to himself, in the free and liberal communications of himself to him. He that goes out in God's battles, fighting under our Saviour's banner, may look upwards, and opening his eyes, may see *the mountains full of horses and chariots of fire round about him*, 2 Kings vii. 17. God hath

not so much delight in the death and destruction of men, as to see them struggling and contending for life, and himself stand by as a looker on. No, but with the most tender and fatherly compassions his bowels yearn over them, and his almighty arm is stretched forth for them; and in his strength they shall prevail: they shall be borne up, as upon eagles' wings; they shall walk in the might of his strength, who is able to save, and not faint. Where there is any serious and sober resolution against sin, any real motion towards God, there is the blessing of Heaven in it: he that planted it will also water it, and make it to bud and blossom and bring forth fruit.

Wherefore, let us make use of this as a further argument to enforce the Apostle's exhortation upon ourselves, *Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*; and, as the Psalmist speaks of his enemies, so let us say of our spiritual enemies, *They compass me about, they compass me in on every side; but in the name of the Lord I will destroy them*, Ps. cxviii. 11. Let us set ourselves with all our might to mortify the old man, and to crucify all the affections of the flesh: *Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily besets us, and run with patience the race that is set before us; looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, who is set down at the right hand of the throne of God*, Heb. xii. 1, 2, as a great and mighty Conqueror, who will declare the perfection of his own power in our weakness, if we lay hold of his strength. Though we are not able to change our own natures, or to rise above the source of our animal and selfish beings, by our own power; yet let us endeavour to subdue all those external vices of luxury and wantonness, of injustice, revenge, and the like; let us withdraw the fuel of pride, malice, vain-glory, and whatsoever else holds us in captivity to hell, and with confidence apply ourselves to him who is an almighty Saviour; and when he joins his almighty strength with us, we need not fear any thing: *he shall tread down Satan under our feet, and we shall one day tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shall we trample under our feet*, Ps. xci. 13: we shall break the serpent's head, though he may bruise our heel. Though God may suffer him so far to serve his own rage and the hellish malice of such as are in league with him, as to pull down

with violence our earthly tabernacles; yet while we so suffer by him, we are conquerors over him. REV. J. SMITH.

*Nothing but the Blood of Sprinkling can wash away our sins.*

MEN are not easily convinced and persuaded of the deep stain of sin, and that no other laver can fetch it out, but the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. Some who have moral resolutions of amendment, dislike at least gross sins, and purpose to avoid them, and it is to them cleanness enough to reform in those things; but they consider not what becomes of the guiltiness they have contracted already, and how that shall be purged, how their natural pollution shall be taken away. Be not deceived in this: it is not a transient sigh, or a light word; or a wish of God forgive me: no, nor the highest current of repentance, nor that which is the truest evidence of repentance, amendment; it is none of these that purify in the sight of God, and expiate wrath; they are all imperfect, and stained themselves, cannot stand and answer for themselves, much less be of value to counterpoise the former guilt of sin. The very tears of the purest repentance, unless they be sprinkled with Christ's blood, are impure; all our washings without this, are but washings of the blackmoor, it is labour in vain. Jer. ii. 22. Job ix. 30, 31. There are none truly purified by the blood of Christ, who do not endeavour after purity of heart and conversation; but yet it is the blood of Christ by which they are all made fair, and there is no spot in them. Here it is said, 1 Pet. i. 2, *elect to obedience*; but because that obedience is not perfect, there must be sprinkling of the blood too. There is nothing in religion further out of Nature's reach, and out of its liking and believing, than the doctrine of redemption by a Saviour, and a crucified Saviour; by Christ, and by his blood, first shed on the cross in his suffering, and then sprinkled on the soul by his Spirit. It is easier to make men sensible of the necessity of repentance and amendment of life (though that is very difficult), than of this purging by the sprinkling of this precious blood. Did we see how needful Christ is to us, we should esteem and love him more.

It is not by the hearing of Christ and of his blood in the doctrine of the Gospel; it is not by the sprinkling of water, even

that water which is the sign of this blood, without the blood itself and the sprinkling of it. Many are present where it is sprinkled, and yet have no portion in it. Look to this, that this blood be sprinkled on your souls, that the destroying angel may pass by you. There is a generation (not some few, but a generation) deceived in this; they are their own deceivers, *pure in their own eyes*, Prov. xxx. 12. How earnestly doth David pray, *Wash me, purge me with hyssop!* Though bathed in tears, that satisfied not—*Wash thou me*, Psal. vi. 6. This is the honourable condition of the saints, that they are purified and consecrated unto God by this sprinkling; yea, they have on *long white robes washed in the blood of the Lamb*.

LEIGHTON.

You must be persuaded of this, that nothing cleanses you from sin, but the sprinkling of Christ's blood, and that this can do it effectually. When the stain of sin is seen upon people's consciences, there are a great many wells of water that the devil and the world dig up; they think to cleanse themselves in their duties, and in their performances, their vows, their purposes, their resolutions, their praying, reading, hearing, and meditating; these are used by a great many, just as water, to wash away the stain of sin on their consciences. Vain, dangerous, wicked ways! things not wicked in themselves, but most wicked as so used. Prayer is a duty, but to put prayer in Christ's place is an abomination. All the ordinances of the Gospel are things commanded us; but to use them so as to keep at a distance from this blood of sprinkling, is to pervert them to our destruction. It is a great matter to believe firmly, that nothing but this blood of sprinkling can justify and cleanse us; and it is also a great matter to believe that this can do it effectually. The poor creature thinks it is now about seventeen hundred years since Christ's blood was shed—and so it is; but what, then? the virtue of it is everlasting, to cleanse us from all sin. *The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin*, 1 John i. 7. But, if you would come to this blood of sprinkling, that it may be upon you, you must adventure upon it, and place all your confidence in it, and make it your only plea for your acceptance and justification before God. *We are justified by his blood*, saith the

Apostle, Rom. v. 9. The believer is to see his justification streaming from the life-blood of the Son of God. When a poor creature sees the holiness of God's law, and the severity of his justice, and feels a disturbance in his own conscience, it is no easy matter to believe that the blood that was shed without the gates of Jerusalem, in the day when this great sacrifice was offered up, is able to wash away all our sins; and that we have nothing else to betake ourselves to: God would have nothing else. Christ tells his Father, *Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me*, Heb. x. 5. Burnt-offerings and sacrifices of the law, the Father would take none of these of Christ, but he took his own life; he took his own blood for the expiation of the sins of his people. REV. R. TRAILL.

*The Blood of Christ as necessary to pardon Sins of weakness and ignorance, as the grossest crimes.*

SEE then what absolute need we all stand in of Jesus Christ. Not only those amongst us whose lives have been openly gross and scandalous, but even those also who are the most circumspect and careful in their walkings. Though they do not wallow and roll themselves in the common pollutions of the world, yet it is not possible but that in so dirty a road they must be besparkled, and their garments spotted with the flesh. Absolute perfection is a state rather to be wished for than enjoyed in this life; the utmost we can here attain unto is not to commit presumptuous sins, nor to allow ourselves in any, when through infirmity we do commit them. But none of our sins, whether of presumption or of weakness, whether of ignorance, or against knowledge, whether the sins of our thoughts, or of our actions, can be pardoned without the blood of God, and the sufferings of our Almighty Saviour. It is the same precious blood that satisfied God's justice for the adultery and murder of David, the incest of Lot, the perjury of Peter, that must satisfy it likewise for thy vain and foolish thoughts, and rash and idle words, if ever thou art saved. For *without blood there is no remission*, Heb. ix. 22; and, without remission there can be no salvation. And, indeed, this is one of the great and main ends of giving the law, that the necessity and all-sufficiency of Christ to save us

may be rendered the more conspicuous. Thus saith the Apostle, Rom. x. 4, *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.* The law was given us, not that we should seek justification by observance of it; but, finding it impossible to be justified by fulfilling of it, we should be thereby driven unto Christ's righteousness, who hath both fulfilled it in himself, and satisfied for our transgressing it. And therefore saith the same Apostle, Gal. iii. 24, *The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.* To this end was it promulgated, that, seeing the multiplicity

and strictness of its commands, the rigour and utter insupportableness of its threatenings, and being withal sensibly convinced of our own weakness and impotency to fulfil the commands enjoined, and, thereupon, of our liableness to undergo the penalty threatened, we might thereby be frightened and terrified unto Christ, (as it were by the severe discipline of a schoolmaster,) to find that righteousness in him which may answer all the demands of the law, and which in ourselves we could not find. And whilst we make this use of the law, we bring it to be subservient to the Gospel. Br. HOPKINS.

## SECTION VII.—ON SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS AND SELF-DEPENDENCE.

### *Evil of Self-righteousness.*

THE Lord Jesus is *not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, Matt. ix. 13. If sinners only are admitted to salvation, why should we seek to enter in by our own righteousness, which is altogether either false or imaginary.

The human heart is never in a state to feel the effect of the mercy of God, till it is entirely divested of every idea of its own worthiness: for the mind cannot be engaged in this, without shutting the door against grace. And that no one should call this truth in question, the Lord Jesus was sent into the world with this commission, *To preach good tidings unto the meek, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to comfort all that mourn; to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*, Isa. lxi. 1, 2, 3. And therefore he invites none to receive the fruits of his mercy, but those *that labour, and are heavy laden*, Matt. xi. 28. And in another place, he saith; *I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, Matt. ix. 13.

Let us lay down this rule, which, though short, is however not the less general and certain; that he who has humbled, and entirely stripped himself of his own righteousness, which properly speaking is but a vain and deceitful shadow of righteousness, is rightly disposed to receive the

fruits of the grace of God. For the more any one depends on himself, the more does he hinder the course of God's mercy.

CALVIN.

Look well to yourselves, brethren, that the worm of self-righteousness eat not up all your religion, and leave you neither root nor branch. We must be stripped of all self-dependence; and when we are so stripped, we must turn to the Cross, with both an eager and a steady eye. It is there alone that Divine Justice is satisfied: there, therefore, we are to obtain peace and rest to our consciences; there we are to say, we have righteousness and strength.

But you hope that your repentance and your good meanings and sincere desires, together with Christ's merits, will save you: Is not this thought lurking in the hearts of many? Know, you must look wholly at Christ, or not at all. The crucified Jesus, the Holy One of Israel, is a pure, unmixed Saviour. You do not know what true repentance is, if you thus, as you evidently do, make a merit of your repentance: and, as to your good meanings and sincere desires, alas! alas! what shall I say to convince you of this most important, yet disagreeable and offensive truth,—that you have no such thing in your nature. To be brought to have a relish for what is good, to see a beauty in holiness, to be established in a course of sincere obedience to God, is the end and upshot of this business. It is the

very issue in which the healing virtue of Christ's blood must terminate.

Sincere obedience is, in short, that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord: this is its true character. Now, if any of you suppose that you have this in yourselves to begin your religion with, if you are already gotten to the uppermost step of the ladder that reaches to heaven, you can have no occasion for Christ. He did not come to save the sincere, or the upright, or the righteous,—Scripture words, which all mean much the same,—but he came, *to justify the ungodly, to save the lost, to quicken the dead.* If you are not of this class, you must make the best of your boasted qualifications and attainments, and try, whether this pretended sincerity be not at bottom pride and self-deception; try, whether it can, in the end, deliver you from everlasting destruction.

Ah! brethren, the lesson is irksome, but it is of the utmost moment, and must be learnt. It is my bounden duty repeatedly to inform you, that you must be brought to know and feel yourselves *by nature children of wrath*;—not sincere; not upright; not possessed of good meanings or good desires. The curse of curses,—the self-righteous principle in the heart, must be subdued; and, when you are thoroughly convinced of your unworthiness, you will have nothing of your own to plead; you will lay aside the Pharisee, and take up the Publican, and cry, *God be merciful to me a sinner!*

REV. JOS. MILNER.

### *Evil of Pride and Self-will.*

BUT I wish it were not the distemper of our times to scare and fright men only with opinions, and make men only solicitous about the entertaining of this and that speculation, which will not render them any thing the better in their lives, or the liker unto God; whilst in the mean time there is no such care taken about keeping of Christ's commandments, and being renewed in our minds according to the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. We say, Lo, here is Christ, and Lo, there is Christ, in these and these opinions; whereas in truth Christ is neither here, nor there, nor any where, but where the Spirit of Christ, where the life of Christ is.

Do we not now-a-days open and lock up heaven with the private key of this or

that opinion of our own, according to our several fancies, as we please? and if any one observe Christ's commandments never so sincerely, and serve God with faith and a pure conscience, that yet haply skills not of some contended for opinions, some darling notions, he hath not the right Shibboleth, he hath not the true watchword, he must not pass the guards into heaven. Do we not make this and that opinion, this and that outward form, to be the wedding-garment, and boldly sentence those to outer darkness that are not invested therewith? whereas every true Christian finds the least dram of hearty affection towards God to be more cordial and sovereign to his soul than all the speculative notions and opinions in the world: and though he study also to inform his understanding aright, and free his mind from all error and misapprehensions; yet it is nothing but the life of Christ deeply rooted in his heart which is the chemical elixir that he feeds upon. Had he all faith that he could remove mountains (as St. Paul speaks), had he all knowledge, all tongues and languages; yet he prizeth one dram of love beyond them all. He accounteth him that feedeth upon mere notions in religion to be but an airy and cameleon-like Christian. He findeth himself now otherwise rooted and centred in God, than when he did before merely contemplate and gaze upon him: he tasteth and relisheth God within himself; he hath *quendam sorem Dei*, a certain savour of him; whereas before he did but rove and guess at random at him. He feeleth himself safely anchored in God, and will not be dissuaded from it, though perhaps he skill not many of those subtilities which others make the Alpha and Omega of their religion. Neither is he scared with those childish affrightments with which some would force their private conceits upon him; he is above the superstitious dreading of mere speculative opinions, as well as the superstitious reverence of outward ceremonies: he cares not so much for subtilty, as for soundness and health of mind. And indeed, as it was well spoken by a noble philosopher, *ἄρως ἀπεριῆς θεὸς ὄνομα μόνον*, that 'without purity and virtue God is nothing but an empty name;' so it is as true here, that without obedience to Christ's commandments, without the life of Christ dwelling in us, whatsoever opinion we entertain of him, Christ is but only named by us, he is not *known*.

I speak not here against a free and ingenuous inquiry into all truth, according to our several abilities and opportunities; I plead not for the captivating and enthraling of our judgments to the dictates of men; I do not disparage the natural improvement of our understanding faculties by true knowledge, which is so noble and gallant a perfection of the mind: but the thing which I am against is, the dispiriting of all the life and vigour of our religion by dry speculations, and making it nothing but a mere dead skeleton of opinions, a few dry bones without any flesh and sinews tied up together, and the misplacing of all our zeal upon an eager prosecution of these, which should be spent to better purpose upon other objects.

Knowledge indeed is a thing far more excellent than riches, outward pleasures, worldly dignities, or any thing else in the world besides holiness, and the conformity of our wills to the will of God: but yet our happiness consisteth not in it, but in a certain divine temper and constitution of soul which is far above it.

But it is a piece of that corruption that runneth through human nature, that we naturally prize truth more than goodness, knowledge more than holiness. We think it a gallant thing to be fluttering up to heaven with our wings of knowledge and speculation: whereas the highest mystery of a divine life here, and of perfect happiness hereafter, consisteth in nothing but mere obedience to the Divine will. Happiness is but that inward sweet delight that will arise from the harmonious agreement between our wills and God's will.

There is nothing contrary to God in the whole world, nothing that fights against him, but self-will. This is the strong castle that we all keep garrisoned against heaven in every one of our hearts, which God continually layeth siege unto: and it must be conquered and demolished before we can conquer heaven: It was by reason of this self-will that Adam fell in Paradise; that those glorious angels, those morning-stars, kept not their first station, but dropt down from heaven like falling stars; and sunk into this condition of bitterness, anxiety and wretchedness in which now they are. They all intangled themselves with the length of their own wings; they would needs will more and otherwise than God would will in them: and going about to make their wills wider, and to enlarge them into greater amplitude, the

more they struggled, they found themselves the faster pinioned, and crowded up into narrowness and servility; insomuch, that now they are not able to use any wings at all; but inheriting the serpent's curse, can only creep with their bellies upon the earth. Now our only way to recover God and happiness again is, not to soar up with our understandings, but to destroy this self-will of ours; and then we shall find our wings to grow again, our plumes fairly spread, and ourselves raised aloft into the free air of perfect liberty, which is perfect happiness.

There is nothing in the whole world able to do us good or hurt but God and our own will; neither riches nor poverty, nor disgrace, nor honour, nor life nor death, nor angels, nor devils; but willing or not willing as we ought. Should hell itself cast all its fiery darts against us, if our will be right, if it be informed by the divine will, they can do us no hurt; we have then (if I may so speak) an enchanted shield that is impenetrable, and will bear off all. God will not hurt us, and hell cannot hurt us, if we will nothing but what God wills. Nay, then we are acted by God himself, and the whole divinity floweth in upon us; and when we have cashiered this self-will of ours, which did but shackle and confine our souls, our wills shall then become truly free, being widened and enlarged to the extent of God's own will. Hereby we know that we know Christ indeed, not by our speculative opinions concerning him, but by our keeping of his commandments.

CUDWORTH.

Of all the evils of our corrupt nature, there is none more connatural and universal than pride, the grand wickedness, self-exalting in our own and others' opinion. Though I will not contest what was the first step in that complicated first sin, yet certainly this of pride was one, and a main ingredient in it,—that which the unbelief conceived going before, and the disobedience following after, were both servants to; and ever since, it sticks still deep in our nature. St. Augustine says truly, 'That which first overcomes man, is the last thing he overcomes.' Some sins, comparatively, may die before us, but this hath life in it, sensibly, as long as we. It is as the heart of all, the first living, and the last dying; and it hath this advantage, that, whereas other sins are fomented by one



another, this feeds even on virtues and graces, as a moth that breeds in them, and consumes them, even in the finest of them, if it be not carefully looked to. This hydra, as one head of it is cut off, another rises up. It will secretly cleave to the best actions, and prey upon them. And therefore is there so much need that we continually watch, and fight, and pray against it, and be restless in the pursuit of real and deep humiliation, daily seeking to advance further in it; to be nothing, and to desire to be nothing; not only to bear, but to love our own abasement, and the things that procure and help it, to take pleasure in them, so far as may be without sin: yea, even in respect of our sinful failings, when they are discovered, to love the bringing low of ourselves by them, while we hate, and grieve for the sin of them.

And, above all, it is requisite to watch ourselves in our best things, that self get not in, or, if it break in, or steal in at any time, that it be presently found out and cast out again; to have that established within us, to do all for God, to intend him and his glory in all, and to be willing to advance his glory, were it by our own disgrace; not to make raising or pleasing thyself the rule of exercising thy parts and graces, when thou art called to use and bring them forth, but the good of thy brethren, and in that, the glory of thy Lord. Now, this is indeed to be severed from self and united to him, to have self-love turned into the love of God. And this his own work: it is above all other hands: therefore, the main combat against pride, and the conquest of it, and the gaining of humility, is certainly by prayer. God bestows himself upon them who are most abundant in prayer; and they to whom he shews himself most are certainly the most humble. LEIGHTON.

#### *Natural tendency of the Heart to Self-dependence.*

EVERY man is, naturally an idolater. Our hearts turned from God in our first fall, and ever since the creature hath been our God. This is the grand sin of nature. Every unregenerate man ascribes to the creature divine prerogatives, and allows it the highest room in his soul; or if he is convinced of misery, he flies to it as his Saviour. Indeed, God and his Christ shall be called Lord and Saviour; but the real

expectation is from the creature, and the work of God is laid upon it. Pleasure, profit, and honour, are the natural man's trinity, and his carnal self is these in unity. It was our first sin to aspire to be as gods; and it is the greatest sin that is propagated in our nature from generation to generation. When God should guide us, we guide ourselves; when he should be our Sovereign, we rule ourselves; the laws which he gave us we find fault with, and would correct; and if we had the making of them, we would have made them otherwise; when he should take care of us, (and must, or we perish) we will take care for ourselves; when we should depend on him in daily receivings, we had rather have our portion in our own hands; when we should submit to his providence, we usually quarrel at it, and think we could make a better disposal than God hath made. When we should study and love, trust and honour God, we study and love, trust and honour our carnal selves. Instead of God, we would have all men's eyes and dependence on us, and all men's thanks returned to us, and would gladly be the only men on earth extolled and admired by all. Thus we are naturally our own idols. BAXTER.

#### *Danger of Self-confidence.*

SURELY every man, in his best estate, is altogether vanity.

Therefore it becometh us to be always humbled in the sight of ourselves, and to be jealous.

1. *Of our original impotency unto the doing of any good, unto the forbearing of any evil, unto the repelling of any temptation by our own power.* In his own might shall no man be strong, 1 Sam. ii. 9. To be a sinner, and to be without strength, are terms equivalent in the Apostle, Rom. v. 6. 8. Nay, even where there is a will to do good, there is a defect of power to perform it, Rom. vii. 18. Our strength is not in ourselves, but in the Lord, and in the power of his might, and in the working of his Spirit in our inner man, Ephes. vi. 10; iii. 19; Phil. iv. 13. If but a good thought arise in our mind, or a good desire and motion be stirring in our heart, or a good word drop from our lips, we have great cause to take notice of the grace of God that offered it to us, and wrought it in us, and to admire how any of the fruit of Paradise could grow in so heathy a wilderness.

II. *Of our natural antipathy and reluctance unto holy duties.*—Our aptness to draw back towards perdition; to refuse and thrust away the offers and motions of grace; our rebellion, which ariseth from the law of the members against the law of the mind; the continual droppings of a corrupt heart upon any of the tender buds and sproutings of piety that are wrought within us; our aptness to be weary of the yoke, and to shake off the burden of Christ from our shoulders, Isa. xliii. 22; our natural levity and inconstancy of spirit in any holy resolutions, continuing as a morning dew, which presently is dried up; beginning in the spirit and ending in the flesh, having interchangeable fits of the one and the other. . . .

III. *Of the manifold decays and abatements of the grace of God in us,* our aptness to leave our first love, Rev. ii. 4. How did Hezekiah fall into an impolitic vainglory, in showing all his treasures unto the ambassadors of a foreign prince, thereby kindling in him a desire to be master of so rich a land, as soon as God left him unto himself! 2 Kings xx. 12, 13. How quickly, without continual husbandry, will a garden or vineyard be wasted, and overgrown with weeds! How easily is a ship, when it is at the very shore, carried with a storm back into the sea again! How quickly will a curious watch, if it lie open, gather dust into the wheels, and be out of order! Though, therefore, thou have found sweetness in religion, joy in the Holy Spirit, comfort, yea, heaven in good duties, power against corruptions, strength against temptations, triumph over afflictions, assurance of God's favour, vigour, life, and great enlargement of heart in the ways of godliness; yet for all this be not high-minded, but fear. Remember the flower that is wide open in the morning, when the sun shines upon it, may be shut up in the evening before night come. If the sun had not stood still, Joshua had not taken vengeance on the enemy, Josh. x. 13; and if the Sun of Righteousness do not constantly shine upon us, and supply us, we shall not be able to pursue and carry on any victorious affections. While God *openeth his hand*, thou art *filled*; but if he *withdraw his face*, thou wilt be *troubled* again, Psalm civ. 28, 29. Therefore take heed of resting on thine own wisdom or strength. Thou mayest, after all this, grieve the Spirit of God, and cause him to depart and hide himself from thee: thou

mayest fall from thy steadfastness, and lose thy wonted comforts: thou mayest have a dead winter upon the face of thy conscience, and be brought to such a sad and disconsolate condition, as to conclude that God hath cast thee out of his sight, that he hath forgotten to be gracious, and hath shut up his loving-kindness in displeasure; to roar out for anguish of spirit, as one whose bones are broken: thy soul may draw nigh to the grave, and thy life to the destroyers, and thou mayest find it a woful and a most insuperable difficulty to recover thy life and strength again. It was so with Job, x. 16, 17. xiii. 26—28. Psalm xxx. 15—31. It was so with David, Psalm li. 8. It was so with Heman, and divers others, Psalm lxxxviii. Job xxxiii. 2, 3. 13. 15. Lamentations iii. Therefore we should still remember in a calm to provide for a storm; to stir up the graces of God continually in ourselves, that they be not quenched; so to rejoice in the Lord, as withal to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; never to let the grace of God puff us up, or make us forgetful of our own weakness; but, as the Apostle saith of himself, in regard of God's grace, *When I am weak, then am I strong*; so to say of ourselves, in regard of our own natural corruption, *When I am strong, then I am weak*.

But this must not so humble us as to deject and dismay us, or make us give over the hope of holding out to the end, when our nature is so weak, our enemies so strong, our temptations so many; but we must withal be quickened by these considerations, with prayer to implore, and with faith to rely on, and draw strength from, the word and grace of God; to have always the window of the soul open towards the Sun of Righteousness, whereby the supplies of his grace to prevent, excite, assist, follow, establish us, and carry on every good thing which he hath begun for us, may be continually admitted. This is one of the most necessary duties for a Christian, to hold constant and fixed purposes in godliness: the Scripture frequently calls upon us for them, that *with purpose of heart we should cleave unto God*; that we should *continue in the grace of God*: that we should be *rooted and grounded in love*: that we would *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*: that we would be *steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the*

*work of the Lord: that we should look to ourselves, that we may not lose the things which we have wrought: that we would hold fast and keep the works of Christ unto the end.* And it is that which godly men are most earnestly solicitous about, and do strive unto with greatest importunity. *I have purposed that my mouth shall not transgress,* Psalm xvii. 3. *Unite my heart to fear thy name,* Psalm lxxxvi. 11. *My heart is fixed to God; my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise,* Psalm lvii. 7. Therefore in this case it is necessary for us to draw nigh unto God, who only can ratify all our pious resolutions: *Who giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no power increaseth strength,* Isa. xl. 29; who only can *settle and stablish the hearts of men,* 1 Pet. v. 10. The conscience of our duty, the sense of our frailty, the power, malice, and cunning of our enemies, the obligation of our covenant, should direct the soul perpetually unto God for the supply of his grace, that that may, in all our weaknesses, be sufficient for us, and *hold us up that we may be safe,* as the Psalmist speaks, Psalm cxix. 117: and that we may never, through infirmity or unstableness of spirit, violate our own resolutions.

BP. REYNOLDS.

Let us then look upon St. Peter in the high priest's palace. St. Peter, not only an Apostle, but one of that number singled out for a companion of our Lord's privacies, admitted to the honour of his most intimate friendship, and, upon all occasions hitherto, expressing his sense of these uncommon favours, by all possible instances of gratitude, and love, and more than common zeal. He was drawn hither at this very time, most probably, from an affectionate concern for his master. Here he resolutely ventured his person, notwithstanding his behaviour in the garden just before, when wounding the high priest's servant, must needs have exposed him, more than all the rest of his brethren, to the danger of being observed, and ill-treated by them, who dealt so barbarously by his Lord. But, alas! this St. Peter was presently so changed from what he had been, that, terrified with the impertinence of an inquisitive servant, he disowned, and denied Jesus; repeated that denial thrice; repeated it after sufficient space for recollection, and at last bound the lie upon

his soul, with solemn oaths, and dreadful imprecations.

Ah! where was now that gallant faith, which made so glorious a confession of this Jesus being the *Christ, the Son of the living God?* St. Matt. xvi. 16. Where that eager courage, that did not fear to meet his Lord, walking upon the sea? Where that bold promise, that though *all should be offended,* and leave their dear Lord in his distress, yet *would he never be offended?* Mark xiv. 29. Where that becoming resolution, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee in any wise?* Matt. xxvi. 35. Where all that fire and intrepidity, which, but a very little while ago, had singly engaged a whole band of armed men, in hope to rescue the Lord he now abjures? What shall we say to such advantages, such warnings, such proofs of affection, such boasted firmness of mind, such desperate attempts, all lost and forgotten, upon the silly surmises of a servant or two, without any formal accusation brought, without any hand laid on him? What two men ever differed more from one another, than this man, in an hour or two; differed from himself? From what himself had oft been proved, and had continued all along, till that very hour or two: from what he hoped, and believed he should, and no doubt intended fully to continue, to the last moment of his life?

Yet so sudden, so prodigious an alteration our Lord foretold and permitted; and such he thought fit we should be acquainted there was, in this great man. Wisely to be sure; as for other reasons, so particularly for these. That this example might effectually convince us, how frail even the best are, how little masters of their own passions, how unfit to undertake for themselves, even when their desires of doing well are most fervent, and their resolutions most sincere. In short, how vain all confidences in our own strength and virtue must needs be, which, by tempting us to imagine we are something, provoke God to withdraw that grace, the necessity whereof we do not then sufficiently apprehend, and so by woful experience make us feel that in truth we are nothing.

This fall of St. Peter, however, as it ought to be applied for a necessary mortification of our vanity; so may it likewise serve us, for a support under our frailties and temptations. But then this is a comfort, which can be regularly administered:

to none, except to them who are careful to be like him in the repentance, whereof we have also an account in the Scripture now under consideration.

DEAN STANHOPE.

*Watch and Pray, lest ye enter into Temptation.*

EVEN in our best estate, when we think ourselves most free from danger of temptation, yea, when we find ourselves most strong by the strength of grace and faith to withstand the assaults and temptations of Satan, or his instruments, labouring to beguile us, and to draw us to error in judgment, to lust of heart, or to any sinful action; even then are we to be vigilant, circumspect and wary, and to watch over our own hearts and lives. The Apostle was careful to keep the Colossians from seducement, when he knew them well ordered and steadfast in faith: so must we in our best and most secure estate (as it may seem to us) fear, and be careful to avoid the danger of temptation. The Apostle saith to such as stand by faith, *Be not high-minded, but fear*, Rom. xi. 20; and, *let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*, 1 Cor. x. 12; which places make nothing against assurance of salvation in true believers, as the Papists urge them, but are admonitions to stir them up to use means of securing themselves, by wariness, and do prove the point in hand, that even then, when we stand, and are steadfast in faith, we are with all circumspection to avoid the danger of temptation: if we call to mind the place where, and the time when our first parents were deceived, we shall easily yield to the necessity of this duty. The place where they were tempted, seduced, and overthrown, was Paradise; the time when, in their state of innocency.

In that our first parents were tempted and fell in Paradise, in time of their innocency, it makes it most clear, that in our best estate we are not to be secure and think ourselves free, (I say not from temptation,) but from the danger of temptation; and therefore in our best estate, when we have most strength of grace, we are to be vigilant, and to watch over ourselves, lest Satan circumvents us. We see our duty, and (that it may be thought upon with profit) we must know that when Satan cannot prevail with us to make us commit gross sins, we having strength of grace to with-

stand him, when he cannot make us to sin by swearing, drunkenness, pride in apparel, or other like fruits of ignorance, and of an unreformed soul; then he will assail us with some spiritual temptation: for example, he will seek to poison our souls with inward pride, to make us (if possibly he can) to swell, and to be lift up in regard of that very grace given to withstand temptation: we therefore (even as many as make conscience of known sins) are to watch over our hearts in this respect, lest Satan get within our hearts, and by his subtilty (ere we be aware) corrupt them with this secret pride; and consider, that it is not enough for us to disallow this corruption: as haply at the hearing of this exhortation, some will say, 'O, God forbid I should so forget myself, as to think highly of that strength God hath given me, and to be lift up with a conceit of that; I know it to be a sin, and I utterly disallow it:' consider, I say, that this is not sufficient; the devil will suffer us to go thus far. As in judgment we disallow it, so in affection we must humble ourselves in fear and prayer before the Lord; knowing this, that at one time or other, we may be tempted and solicited by Satan to this sin of secret pride; and if in judgment only we disallow it, and be not humbled in fear and prayer against it, we shall not be able to stand in time of temptation: our Saviour therefore hath taught us, and he often repeats it, that we are to watch and pray, that we fall not into temptation. It is worth our marking, that he saith, Mark xiii. 33, *Take heed, or look, watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is*; as if he had said, it is not enough for you to look about you, to espy this or that sin, but you are to watch over yourselves in regard of temptation to it; yea, to be humbled in fear and prayer, that you may be strengthened against it.

REV. E. ELTON.

Self-sufficiency and self-dependence are the most natural and most destructive of all sins. We are never poorer than when we think we are rich in ourselves; nor ever in more danger of falling than when we think we stand. Such thoughts as these greatly weaken every grace and strengthen every corruption. I have found this truth verified in my own experience lately, and that to my great sorrow: *He that trusteth his own heart is a fool*, even when his heart is in its best, its most heavenly and

spiritual frame. When we feel the graces of the Spirit working with some degree of strength, the Lord only can keep us from depending on *them*, instead of on him who is the strength of his people. If faith exerts itself in some small degree, in what danger do I find myself of making my faith my saviour. To depend, in the midst of all my comforts, joys, or triumphs, as a weak, helpless, guilty sinner, on an All-sufficient Saviour, is not an easy thing. This is one reason, I believe, why my seasons of comfort are generally of but short continuance. I soon begin to live on the fulness within myself, and not on the fulness laid up in Christ for my use. *The just shall live by faith*; and when he seeks to live otherwise than by faith, his life immediately begins to decay, his strength waxes feeble, his vigour languishes, his joys depart, and his soul gets lean and barren. To live by faith is a strange, mysterious, and supernatural life, that no creature in the universe knows any thing of, but the believer; and it is not without the greatest difficulty that even he is brought to make any proficiency in it. I am never out of danger. Lord, keep me!

REV. T. CHARLES.

*How Self-righteousness may exist with high professions of Self-renunciation.*

THERE are some professors who are fluent in talking against legal doctrines, legal preaching, and a legal spirit,\* who little understand what they exclaim against. A legal spirit is a more subtle thing than they imagine: it is too subtle for them. It lurks, and operates, and prevails in their hearts, and they are most deeply possessed with it, at the time that they are inveighing against it. So far as a man is not emptied of himself, and of his own righteousness, in every form and shape, so far he is of a legal spirit. A spirit of pride as to our faith, humility, affections, experience, righteousness, or holiness, is a legal spirit. It was not pride in Adam before his fall, to be of a legal spirit; because in the circumstances in which he was placed, he might seek acceptance with God by his own righteousness. But a legal spirit, in a fallen creature, can be nothing but spiritual pride; and, on the contrary, a proud spirit, however modified, is a legal spirit. Every man who is lifted up by an elevated opinion of his experience, trusts in that

experience, and makes a righteousness of it; whatever humble language he may use with respect to himself, and though he attribute his discoveries to the operations of divine grace, and even call upon others to glorify God for them. He who is proud of his experience, arrogates something to himself, as though his experience were a kind of dignity of his own. And if he regards it as conferring upon him a sort of importance, he believes that God views it in the same light; for he, of course, thinks his own judgment of it correct, and consequently supposes that God regards it as he does. And thus he trusts to what he himself possesses, to recommend him to God; and with this encouragement he goes before God in prayer, expecting much from him. This makes him think that Christ loves him, and that he has clothed him with the garment of salvation. This, in an eminent degree, is living on his own righteousness, and persons who thus live are in the high road to everlasting perdition. Deluded creatures! they think that they appear amiable in the eyes of God, when they are *a smoke in his nose*; and many of them, more odious than the most profligate persons who made no pretensions to religion!

There are professors who exclaim against legality, and talk much about faith as opposed to works; who exalt themselves as more evangelical in their sentiments than their brethren; but who are indeed among the greatest enemies of the doctrines of free grace, and the most dangerous opposers of pure Christianity.

There is a pretended humility,—a professed deadness to the law, which is one of the proudest things in the world. There are some persons who make great professions of having experienced a thorough work of the law on their hearts, and of being brought fully from dependence on their own works; whose conversation savours more of a self-righteous spirit, than that of any other description of persons with whom I have had an opportunity of being acquainted. And some who think themselves quite emptied of self, and abased in the dust, are as full as possible of pride: they are lifted up with a high opinion of their humility and self-abasement. Their humility, to use very improper terms, is a confident, showy, assuming humility. It appears to be the nature of spiritual pride, to make professors ostentatious with respect to this grace.

To be truly emptied of self,—to be poor in spirit,—to be broken in heart, is quite another thing, and has quite other effects from what many persons imagine. It is astonishing to observe, how many are deceived about themselves, as to this matter, imagining that they are very humble, when they are very proud, and their behaviour very haughty. The deceitfulness of the human heart appears in nothing so much, as in spiritual pride, and self-righteousness. The subtlety of Satan is most eminent in his management of persons as to these sins. Here perhaps he has most experience: he is acquainted with the secret springs of pride: it was his own prevailing sin.

PRES. EDWARDS.

*Folly of Glorifying in our good Hearts and Intentions.*

MEN are apt to glory of their good hearts and intentions, only because they cannot search them; and, being carnal themselves, to entertain none but carnal notions of God's service. But if they knew the purity and jealousy of God, and their own impotency to answer so holy a will, they would lay their hands upon their mouths, and with Job, abhor themselves; and with Isaiah, bewail the uncleanness of their lips; and with Moses, fear and quake, as not being able to endure the things that are commanded; and with Joshua, acknowledge that they cannot serve God because he is holy. They would then remember, that *The law of God is a law of fire*, Deut. xxxiii. 2; and *the tribunal of God, a tribunal of fire*, Ezek. i. 27; that *the pleadings of God with sinners are in flames of fire*, Isa. lxvi. 15, 16; that *the trial of all our works shall be by fire*, 1 Cor. iii. 13; that *the God before whom we must appear is a consuming fire*, Heb. xii. 29. Go now, and bring thy straw and stubble, thy drowsy and sluggish devotion, thy fickle and flattering repentance, thy formal and demure service into the fire, to the law to measure them, to the judge to censure them; nay, now carry them to thine own conscience; and tell me whether that will not pass the Father's verdict upon them, 'Sordet in conspectu judicis, quod fulget in conspectu operantis,' That which is fair in thine eye, is filthy in God's. BR. REYNOLDS.

The wise man saith, in Prov. xxi, *Every way of a man is right in his own eyes.*

ANTH.

Who should think it possible, that every individual could be satisfied with himself, and think himself in the right way? But consult experience; consider mankind, before they had received grace, and you will always find them pleased with themselves, ready to defend their conduct, and justify their behaviour. Do we not see persons in the world, whom decency prevents from boasting of their penetration, sense and insight, lest they should be charged with presumption and pride; who nevertheless have not the least scruple of speaking favourably of themselves, and endeavouring to persuade others, that they are at least endowed with some moral goodness. Whereas, in fact, the understanding is less to be blamed than the heart, which is evil from our youth (Gen. viii. 21; Matt. xv. 19). When we receive grace, the first change it effects is, to teach us to abhor ourselves, and to condemn our heart and conduct, in every respect.—So true it is, that we do not know ourselves, particularly with regard to the concerns of the heart. What a pity! How blind are we on this head! It is a common saying, 'I value myself upon nothing so much, as on having a good heart. I have my faults, I have no great abilities, I am at times too fond of this or the other thing, but in the bottom, I have a good heart.' A good heart? Alas! it is that which deceives you, it is the worst part in you.

SUPERVILLE.

*The Evil of the Heart unknown till Temptation exposes it.*

MEN little think how weak they are, until God permits them to fall into such circumstances, as to give scandalous proofs of their weakness and irresolution. How often had our blessed Lord declared to his disciples the weakness of their nature, and they would not believe it? Peter contradicted his Master time after time, and thought, that though he could not be answerable for his brethren, yet he could vouch for himself that he would bear his Master company to prison and to death; and with this sanguine presumption he also inflamed the rest of the disciples, so that they all made the like protestation. But what they would not believe, they were to experience to their sorrow. Thus also is it with many Christians, whose natural self-love is a flattering mirror, which exhibits a much more beautiful appearance than

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they in reality have. We entertain such an high opinion of our own hearts, that we think them proof against every attack. The secret delusion that lurks in the heart, we are not willing to hear of. Thus, there is no end of palliatives; and every one of us industriously gathers fig-leaves to cover his own nakedness. We confidently venture ourselves in so many conjunctures, which may be an occasion of falling; and yet, at other times, we are ready to plead the frailty of human nature, when we are exhorted to greater earnestness in religion. The measures that God takes for bringing such persons to a knowledge of themselves, and their inability, is, to permit them to fall into such circumstances, as will lay open the inmost recesses of their hearts; and, for their amendment, to suffer them to commit such faults, as must evidently show them that their hearts are not so sound as they imagine. Happy is he, who abases himself in the spirit of real humility, so that God has no occasion to humble him. . . .

Possibly many, who read this, may say, 'Had I been in Peter's place, I should have showed more courage and resolution than to be so shamefully foiled by a servant-maid, as to deny my Saviour.' But to such persons it may be justly answered, 'Thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee.' Whoever argues in this manner little knows his own heart; and his strength, in the hour of temptation, will be little answerable to the fond opinion he conceives of it.

RAMBACH.

### *True Satisfaction in a dependent frame of Mind.*

THE thoughts of living at the will and pleasure of another are grating; but they are only grating to a proud heart, which here hath no place. A soul naturalised to humiliations, accustomed to prostrations and self-abasements, trained up in acts of mortification, and that was brought to glory through a continued course and series of self-denial; that ever since it first came to know itself was wont to depend for every moment's breath, for every glimpse of light, for every fresh influence, *I live, yet not I*, Gal. ii. 20, with what pleasure doth it now, as it were, vanish before the Lord! what delight doth it take to diminish itself, and as it were, disap-

pear; to contract and shrivel up itself, to shrink even into a point, into a nothing, in the presence of the divine glory, that it may be all in all!

The magnifying and exalting of God is the most connatural thing to the holy soul; the most fundamental and deeply impressed law of the new creature. Self gives place that God may take it; becomes nothing that he may be all; it vanishes that his glory may shine the brighter. Dependence gives God his proper glory. It is the peculiar honour and prerogative of a Deity to have a world of creatures hanging upon it, staying themselves upon it; to be the fulcrum, the centre of a lapsing creation.

How unspeakably pleasant to a holy soul will such a perpetual agnition or acknowledgment of God be! when the perpetuation of its being shall be nothing else than a perpetuation of this acknowledgment; when every renewed aspiration, every motion, every pulse of the glorified soul, shall be but a repetition of it; when it shall find itself in the eternity of life, that everlasting state of life which it now possesses, to be nothing else than an everlasting testimony that God is God. He is so; for I am, I live, I act, I have the power to love him, none of which could otherwise be. When amongst the innumerable myriads of the heavenly host, this shall be the mutual, alternate testimony of each to all the rest throughout eternity, will not this be pleasant? When each shall feel continually the fresh illapses and incomes of God, the power and sweetness of Divine influences, the enlivening vigour of that vital breath, and find in themselves, thus we live and are sustained; and are yet as secure, touching the continuance of this state of life, as if every one were a god to himself, and did each one possess an entire godhead.

REV. J. HOWE.

*As we can do nothing of ourselves the praise of all we do should be ascribed to God.*

THESE same good works which the Lord works in us, he is content to ascribe them to us, and calls them ours. Of ourselves, we must say with the Apostle, *We are not sufficient of ourselves to think so much as a good thought*, Phil. ii. 12. Our sufficiency is of God, and it is he who worketh in us both the will and the deed: so he

works in us, that he makes us through his grace willing workers with him: through him that strengthens us we are able to do all things, and therefore the praise of all the good we can do should be ascribed unto God. When David had offered to God abundance of silver and gold, and other metals, which he had prepared for the house of God, he concludes in the humility of his heart, *What am I, O Lord, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee*, 1 Chron. xxix. 14. But much more when we do any work of sanctification, for the building of ourselves up into a spiritual temple to the Lord our God, we may say, O Lord, all the good we can do, is of thee, and of thine own hand we have given back unto thee; for except thou, Lord, hadst given unto us grace, we should never have given to thee obedience.

Let therefore the presumptuous conceit of merit, yet again, be far from us; seeing the good which we do is debt, and is done also by the Spirit of the Lord in us, let us reserve the glory thereof unto him. '*Quære dona mea, non merita tua, quia si ego quærerem merita tua, non venire ad dona mea.*' Seek my gifts (saith Augustine, speaking in the name of the Lord) not thy merits, for if I should seek thy merits, thou shouldest never be partaker of my gifts. When the Apostle St. Paul had reckoned out, how he had laboured more abundantly in the work of the ministry than all the rest of the Apostles, he subjoins, as it were, by correction, *yet not I, but the grace of God is in me*, 1 Cor. xv. 10; teaching us, when we have done all the good we can, to be humble in ourselves, and give the glory to God: if he promise us a crown, '*nihil coronat nisi dona sua*,' he crowns no other thing but his own gifts: if by promise he binds himself a debtor unto us to give us a reward, '*Debitor factus est nobis, non aliquid a nobis accipiendū, sed quod ille placuit promittendo*:' He is become a debtor unto us, not by receiving any thing from us, but by promising freely to us that which pleased him: and therefore, when we are exhorted to mortify the deeds of the body by the Spirit, let us first turn this and the like of these precepts into prayers, that the Lord would enable us by grace to do that which he commands us, and then when in some

measure we have done it, that we return the praise and glory to the Lord.

BR. COWPER.

*Too much Importance attached to human Agency.*

Is it not strange to observe how carefully some philosophers, who deplore the condition of the world, and profess to expect its amelioration, keep their speculations clear of every idea of Divine Interposition? No builders of houses or cities were ever more attentive to guard against the access of inundation or fire. If He should but touch their prospective theories of improvement, they would renounce them, as defiled and fit only for vulgar fanaticism. Their system of Providence would be profaned by the intrusion of the Almighty. Man is to effect an apotheosis for himself, by the hopeful process of exhausting his corruptions. And should it take all but an endless series of ages, vices, and woes, to reach this glorious attainment, patience may sustain itself the while by the thought that when it is realised, it will be burdened with no duty of religious gratitude. No time is too long to wait, no cost too deep to incur, for the triumph of proving that we have no need of that one attribute of a Divinity, which creates the grand interest in acknowledging such a Being, the benevolence that would make us happy. But even if this triumph should be found unattainable, the independence of spirit which has laboured for it, must not at last sink into piety. This afflicted world, 'this poor terrestrial citadel of man,' is to lock its gates, and keep its miseries, rather than admit the degradation of receiving help from God.

I wish it were not true that even men who firmly believe in the general doctrine of the Divine government of the world, are often betrayed into the impiety of attaching an excessive importance to human agency in its events. How easily a creature of their own species is transformed by a sympathetic pride into a god before them! If what they deem the cause of truth and justice, advances with a splendid front of distinguished names of legislators, or patriots, or military heroes, it must then, and must therefore triumph; nothing can withstand such talents, accompanied by the zeal of so many faithful adherents. If these shining insects of fame are crushed, or sink into the despicable reptiles of



corruption, alas, then, for the cause of truth and justice! All this while, there is no solemn reference to the 'Blessed and only Potentate.' If, however, the foundations of their religious faith have not been shaken, and they possess any docility to the lessons of time, they will after a while be taught to withdraw their dependence and confidence from all subordinate agents, and habitually regard the Supreme Being as the only power in the creation.

It strikes me as not improbable, that the grand moral improvements of a future age may be accomplished in a manner that shall leave nothing to man but humility and grateful adoration. His pride so obstinately ascribes to himself whatever good is effected on the globe, that perhaps the Deity will evince his own interposition, by events as evidently independent of human power as the rising of the sun. Perhaps some of them may take place in a manner but little connected even with human operation. Or if the activity of men shall be employed as the means of producing all of them, there will probably be as palpable a disproportion between the instruments and the events, as there was between the rod of Moses and the stupendous phenomena which followed its being stretched forth. No Israelite was foolish enough to ascribe to the rod the power that divided the sea; nor will any witness of the moral wonders to come attribute them to man. . .

I should deem a train of observations of the melancholy hue which shades some of the latter pages of this essay, useless, or perhaps even noxious, were I not convinced that a serious exhibition of the feebleness of human agency in relation to all great objects, might aggravate the impression, often so faint, of the absolute supremacy of God, of the total dependence of all mortal effort on him, and of the necessity of devoutly regarding his intervention at every moment. It might promote that last attainment of a zealously good man, the resignation to be as diminutive an agent as God pleases, and as unsuccessful a one. I am assured also that, in a pious mind, the humiliating estimate of means and human power, and the consequent sinking down of all lofty expectations founded on them, will leave one single mean, and that far the best of all, to be

held not only of undiminished but of more eminent value than ever was ascribed to it before. The noblest of all human means must be that which obtains the exertion of Divine power. The means which, introducing no foreign agency, are applied directly and immediately to their objects, seem to bear such a defined proportion to those objects, as to assign and limit the probable effect. This strict proportion exists no longer, and therefore the possible effects become too great for calculation, when that expedient is solemnly employed, which is appointed as the mean of engaging the Divine energy to act on the object. If the only means by which Jehoshaphat sought to overcome his superior enemy had been his troops, horses, and arms, the proportion between these means and the end would have been perfectly assignable, and the probable result of the conflict a matter of ordinary calculation. But when he said *Neither know we what to do, but our eyes are up unto thee*, he moved (I speak it reverently) a new and infinite force to evade the host of Moab and Ammon; and the consequence displayed in their camp the difference between an irreligious leader, who could fight only with arms and on the level of the plain, and a pious one, who could thus assault from heaven. It may not, I own, be perfectly correct, to cite, in illustration of the efficacy of prayer, the most wonderful ancient examples. Nor is it needful, since the experience of devout and eminently rational men, in latter times, has supplied a great number of striking instances of important advantages so connected with prayer, that they deemed them the evident result of it. This experience, taken in confirmation of the assurances of the Bible, warrants ample expectations of the efficacy of an earnest and habitual devotion; provided still, as I need not remind you, that this mean be employed as the grand auxiliary of the other means, and not alone, till all the rest are exhausted or impracticable. And I am convinced that every man who, amidst his serious projects, is apprised of his dependence on God, as completely as that dependence is a fact, will be impelled to pray, and anxious to induce his serious friends to pray, almost every hour.

FOSTER.

## SECTION VIII.—ON REPENTANCE.

*Nature of Repentance.*

THE first question in repentance is, *What have I done?* Jer. viii. 6; and the next question is, *What shall I do?* Acts ix. 6. And this care repentance worketh:

First; *by a godly sorrow for sin past.* It brings into a man's remembrance the history of his former life; makes him, with heaviness of spirit, recount the guilt of so many innumerable sins, wherewith he hath bound himself as with chains of darkness; the loss of so much precious time, mispent in the service of such a master, as had no other wages to give but shame and death; the horrible indignities thereby offered to the majesty and justice of God; the odious contempt of his holy will, and sovereign authority; the daring neglect of his threatening, and undervaluing of his rewards; the high provocation of his jealousy and displeasure; the base corrivalry and contesting of filthy lusts with the grace of the Gospel, and the precious blood of the Son of God; the gainsaying, and wrestling, and stubborn antipathy of a carnal heart to the pure motions of the Spirit and word of Christ; the presumptuous repulses of him that standeth at the door and knocks, waiting that he may be gracious; the long turning of his back, and thrusting away from him the word of reconciliation, wherein Christ, by his ambassadors, had so often beseeched him to be reconciled unto God:—the remembrance of these things makes a man look with self-aborrancy upon himself, and full detestation upon his former courses. And he now no longer considers the silver or the gold, the profit or the pleasure of his wonted lusts:—though they be never so delectable or desirable in the eye of flesh, he looks upon them as accursed things to be thrown away, as the converts did upon their costly and curious books, Acts xix. 19; Isaiah xxx. 22, xxxi. 7. Sin is like a painted picture: on the one side of it, to the impenitent, appeareth nothing but the beauty of pleasure, whereby it bewitcheth and allureth them; on the other side to the penitent appeareth nothing but the horrid and ugly face of guilt and shame, whereby it amazeth and confoundeth them. Thus the remembrance of sin past (which they are very careful to keep

always in their sight) doth, by godly sorrow, work especial care of amendment of life for the time to come, 2 Chron. vi. 37, 38; Psalm cxix. 59; Ezek. xvi. 61—63, xx. 43.

Secondly; *by a present sense of the weight and burden of remaining corruptions*, which work, and move, and put forth what strength they can, to resist the grace of God in us. As the time past wherein sin reigned, so the present burden of sin besetting us, is esteemed sufficient, and makes a man careful not to load himself wilfully with more, being ready to sink, and forced to cry out under the pain of those which he unwillingly lieth under already. A very glutton when he is in a fit of the gout or stone, will forbear those meats which feed so painful diseases: a penitent sinner is continually in pain under the body of sin; and therefore dares not feed so dangerous and tormenting a disease. The more spiritual any man is, the more painful and burdensome is corruption to him, Rom. vii. 22. For sin to the new man is as sickness to the natural man. The more exquisite and delicate the natural senses are, the more are they sensible and affected with that which offends nature. Contraries cannot be together without combat. The spirit will lust against the flesh, and not suffer a man to fulfil the lusts of it, Gal. v. 16, 17. The seed of God will keep down the strength of sin, 1 John iii. 9.

Thirdly; *by a holy jealousy, and godly fear of the falseness and backsliding of our corrupt heart*; lest, like Lot's wife, it should look back towards Sodom; and, like Israel, have a mind hankering after the flesh-pots of Egypt, the wonted profits and pleasures of forsaken lusts. A godly heart prizeth the love of God, and the feelings of spiritual comfort, from thence arising, above all other things; and is afraid to lose them. It hath felt the burnings of sin; the stinging of these fiery serpents; and hath often been forced to befool itself, and to beshrew its own ignorance, and, with Ephraim, to smite upon the thigh. And as the burnt child dreads the fire, and dares not meddle any more with it, so the renewed heart considers the heaviness of God's frown, the rigour of his law, the weakness and fickleness of the

heart of man, the difficulty of finding Christ out when he hath withdrawn himself, and of recovering light and peace again, when the soul hath wilfully brought itself under a cloud; and therefore will not venture to harden itself against God. Thus godly fear keeps men from sin.

Fourthly; *by a love to Christ, and a sweet recounting of the mercies of God in him.* The less a man loves sin, the more he shall love Christ. Now repentance works a hatred of sin, and thereupon a love of Christ; which love is evermore operative, and putting forth itself towards holiness of life. As the love of God in Christ towards us worketh forgiveness of sin; so our reciprocal love, wrought by the feeling and comfort of that forgiveness, worketh in us a hatred of sin. A direct love begets a reflect love, as the heat, wrought in the earth, strikes back a heat into the air again. The woman in the Gospel, *having much forgiven her, loved much*, Luke vii. 47. *We love him because he loved us first*; and love will not suffer a man to wrong the things which he loves. What man ever threw away jewels or money, when he might have kept them, except when the predominant love of something better made these things comparatively hateful? Luke xiv. 26. What woman would be persuaded to throw away her sucking child from her breast unto swine or dogs to devour it? Our love to Christ and his law will not suffer us to cast him off, or to throw his law behind our backs. Now obedience is ever joined unto pardon of sin and repentance for it, by the method of God's decrees, by the order and chain of salvation; and ariseth out of the internal character and disposition of a child of God. We are not sons only by adoption, appointed to a new inheritance; but we are sons by regeneration also, partakers of a new nature, designed unto a new life, joined unto a new head, descended from a new Adam; unto whom, therefore, we are, in the power of his resurrection, and in the fellowship of his sufferings, to be made conformable, Phil. iii. 10.

BP. REYNOLDS.

#### *Repentance a New Creation.*

IN that David craves a clean heart may be created in him, he acknowledgeth that his sin hath not only wounded him, but slain him, and that he stood in need not of any reparation, but of a new creation,

wherein he utterly distrusteth the power of his nature: yea, the ability of his own free will, notwithstanding grace once resumed, he finds it so oppressed by the power of his corruption, that he is forced to crave from God the benefit of a new creation. Of ourselves we fall, but of ourselves we rise not again. Not only is our first conversion a work of God's grace altogether and alone; but the works of our restitution by repentance, after we have fallen: as it is in the Lord's praise, *He quickened us, when we were dead: so is it his praise, that he keeps our souls in life. The Lord made us; we made not ourselves*, Psal. c. We are content to give him the glory of our first creation, let us also give him the glory of our second creation. Yea, so oft as we fall into sin, let us consider, that our rising again is no less a work of the great power and mercy of God, than was the raising of Lazarus out of the grave; for otherwise we should have lain still with others, rotting and perishing in our sins. And so have we to praise the Lord, not only for our first and second creation, but for the renewing of that benefit unto us, as oft as we by our transgression have lost that life which the Lord did once communicate unto us.

And this, that our sanctification, or restitution by repentance, after that we have sinned, is called new creation, renders yet unto us a profitable instruction, if we compare our new creation with Adam his first creation. When shall we say that Adam was made a natural man? Never till the Lord breathed the breath of life into him: the Lord first formed his body of clay, after the same shape and similitude, that now you see the body of man in all the proportion of the members thereof. No image can be made by man's wit so lively representing a man, as did that portraiture of clay, which the Lord at the first formed with his own hand, but all this time it lay upon the ground, having eyes that saw not, ears that heard not, a mouth that could not speak, and feet that could not walk: he was then very like unto that which now man is; but (as I said) was not a natural man till God breathed the breath of life into him. Let us consider the like in the new creation: how many shall you find very like unto Christians baptised in the name of Jesus, who have a mouth to speak, and an eye to look up unto heaven, and an ear, as a man would think, to hear

very reverently the word of the Lord: who, when all is done, whatever they seem in the eyes of men, are no other in God's sight but as the carcasses of Christians; so to speak, destitute of that quickening Spirit of grace, which only gives life to the actions of men? Let us take heed to ourselves that we be not of that number; for then only have we this comfort, that we are Christians indeed, when we find that quickening Spirit of grace, which is in Christ Jesus, communicating life unto our spirits, that what we do in the works of Christianity stand not in external show, but may proceed from inward sense and feeling.

BR. COWPER.

*The Common and Fatal Error in Man's Repentance.*

THERE are men who direct their humiliations and penitential cleansings only to some great actual sin, that has broke out in their lives, and in the mean time never to the power and root of sin, which is the cause of all these actual rebellions. These indeed are most conspicuous in our lives, but the other is the most dangerous and hurtful to our souls. For this is that spring-head that lies under ground, and sends forth all those streams of impurity that flow in all our actions. Now that should most humble us that most provokes God; but it is the sinful frame of the heart, the inclination and disposition of the whole man to wickedness, that renders us so loathsome in the pure eyes of God. We indeed take more notice of a sinful action than of a sinful heart, because that does more vex and disquiet us, and is more visible to ourselves and others. But when repentance is sincere and effectual, where it resolves to kill sin, it gives the first stab to the heart. Thus David, an excellent pattern of true penitence, when he would humble himself for those actual sins of murder and adultery, he pursues them to their first cause, which was his sinful nature. They indeed made a greater noise and clamour in the world, and procured him more trouble and shame from men; but he knew that the power of sin in his heart was most odious, and, consequently, most deserved his sorrow. From whence we may take an excellent and infallible note of difference between a forced insincere, and a true spiritual repentance; that the first humbles us chiefly for the sin of our hearts and natures, and that because

it is the most sinful. \*For that it is so, is clear from this consideration; because the sin of our natures makes our actual state and condition sinful, which a bare actual transgression does not. No wonder, therefore, if many poor deluded persons, who spend much time and labour to purify themselves, yet, after all, are not purified. For they fasten their repentance on some one actual sin, but overlook the power. But this certainly is to take the wrong way, and to labour in the fire. Whosoever, therefore, would be thoroughly purified, must begin the work here; strike at the foundation, stop the fountain, block up that place from whence sin receives its supplies; otherwise all labour, all sorrow and humiliation will avail nothing. For after it has beat back sin from one place, it will break out in another. When one actual sin disappears in a man's life, another will presently start forth. The only sure and infallible way of destroying the effect is first to remove the cause.

Another ineffectual course to purify the heart from sin is, when men rest only in complaints of the evil of their natures, without a vigorous endeavour to amend the particular enormities and misdemeanour of their actions. This course is directly contrary to the former, which pursues the reformation of particular actions, without regarding the purification of the heart. Both ways are equally unsuccessful. For to purge the actions before the heart is preposterous; and to complain of the heart without reforming the actions, is vain and superfluous. Many complain and cry out very tragically of the wretchedness of their hearts, their total indisposition to all good, and exceeding propensity to all sin. All which may be very true. But while they are complaining of their hearts, perhaps they freely allow themselves in some known course of disobedience; they frequently renew wounds upon their consciences by the repeated commission of actual sin; and this surely is not the way ever to get themselves purified; thus to complain of sin, and to commit sin; to ensure their complaints by their practices; to cry out of the body of sin, and yet to take no notice of actual impieties; this is a provocation of God, and abuse to themselves. Their business is to turn complaints into endeavours, words into actions, and vigorously oppose every particular temptation; to stifle every sinful

suggestion. For certainly none ever truly hated the sinfulness of his heart who did not in some measure reform the sinfulness of his actions.

DR. SOUTH.

*There is no true Repentance without Christ and Faith in Him.*

BECAUSE we have of our own selves nothing to present us to God, and do no less flee from him after our fall, than our first parent Adam did—who, when he had sinned, did seek to hide himself from the sight of God—we have need of a Mediator for to bring and reconcile us unto him, who for our sins is angry with us. The same is Jesus Christ; who being true and natural God, equal and of one substance with the Father, did, at the time appointed, take upon him our frail nature, in the blessed Virgin's womb, and that of her undefiled substance, that so he might be a Mediator between God and us, and pacify his wrath. Of him doth the Father himself speak from heaven, saying, *This is my well-beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*, Matt. iii. 17. And he himself in his Gospel doth cry out and say, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me*, John xiv. 6; i. 36. For he alone did with the sacrifice of his body and blood make satisfaction unto the justice of God for our sins, 1 Pet. i. 16, 17. The Apostles do testify that *he was exalted for to give repentance and remission of sins unto Israel*, Acts v. 31. Both which things he himself did command to be preached in his name, Luke xxiv. 47; John xv. 27. Therefore they are greatly deceived that preach repentance without Christ, and teach the simple and ignorant that it consisteth only in the works of men. They may indeed speak many things of good works, and of amendment of life and manners: but without Christ they be all vain and unprofitable. They that think they have done much of themselves towards repentance, are so much more the farther from God, because they do seek those things in their own works and merits, which ought only to be sought in our Saviour Jesus Christ, and in the merits of his death, and passion, and blood-shedding. . . .

What should avail and profit us to be sorry for our sins, to lament and bewail that we have offended our most bounteous and merciful Father, or to confess and acknowledge our offences and trespasses,

though it be done never so earnestly, unless we do steadfastly believe, and be fully persuaded, that God, for his Son Jesus Christ's sake, will forgive us all our sins, and put them out of remembrance, and from his sight?

Therefore, they that teach repentance without a lively faith in our Saviour Jesus Christ, do teach none other but Judas's repentance; as all the schoolmen do, which do only allow these three parts of repentance—the contrition of the heart, the confession of the mouth, and the satisfaction of the work. But all these things we find in Judas's repentance, which in outward appearance did far exceed and pass the repentance of Peter, Matt. xxvii. 3. For, first and foremost, we read in the Gospel, that Judas was so sorrowful and heavy, yea, that he was filled with such anguish and vexation of mind, for that which he had done, that he could not abide to live any longer. Did not he also, before he hanged himself, make an open confession of his fault, when he said, *I have sinned, betraying the innocent blood?* And verily this was a very bold confession, which might have brought him to great trouble. For by it he did lay to the high priest's and elders' charge the shedding of innocent blood, and that they were most abominable murderers. He did also make a certain kind of satisfaction, when he did cast their money unto them again.

No such thing do we read of Peter; although he had committed a very heinous sin, and most grievous offence, in denying of his Master. We find that *he went out, and wept bitterly*; whereof Ambrose speaketh on this manner: 'Peter was sorry and wept, because he erred as a man. I do not find what he said: I know that he wept. I read of his tears, but not of his satisfaction. But how chance that the one was received into favour again with God, and the other cast away, but because that the one did, by a lively faith in him whom he had denied, take hold of the mercy of God; and the other wanted faith, whereby he did despair of the goodness and mercy of God?'

It is evident and plain then, that, although we be never so earnestly sorry for our sins, acknowledge and confess them; yet all these things shall be but means to bring us to utter desperation, except we do steadfastly believe that God our heavenly Father will, for his Son Jesus Christ's

sake, pardon and forgive us our offences and trespasses, and utterly put them out of remembrance in his sight. Therefore, as we said before, they that teach repentance without Christ, and a lively faith in the mercy of God, do only teach Cain's or Judas's repentance.

#### HOMILY ON REPENTANCE.

No duty or work within the power and performance of man, as such, is able to expiate and take away the guilt of sin. In this matter we must put our hands upon our mouths and be silent for ever. He that thinks and attempts by his own goodness to satisfy God's justice, does by this the more incense it; and by endeavouring to remove his guilt, does indeed increase it. His works of satisfaction for sin are the greatest sins, and stand most in need of the satisfaction of Christ. We know how miserably deluded the papists are in this point, how they wander in the maze of their own inventions about works of penance, deeds of charity, pilgrimages, and many other such vain ways found out by them to purge and purify guilty consciences. A man, perhaps, has committed some gross sin, the guilt of which lies hard and heavy upon his conscience, and how shall he remove it? Why, peradventure, by a blind devotion, he says over so many prayers, goes so many miles barefoot, gives so much to holy uses, and now he is 'rectus in curiâ,' free and absolved in the court of heaven. But certainly the folly of those that practise these things is to be pitied; and the blasphemy of those that teach them to be detested. For do they know and consider what sin is, and whom it strikes at? Is it not the breach of the law? Is it not against the infinite justice and sovereignty of the great God? and can the poor imperfect finite services of a sinful creature ever make up such a breach? Can our pitiful broken mite discharge the debt of ten thousand talents? Those that can imagine the removal of the least sin feasible, by the choicest and most religious of their own works, never as yet knew God truly, nor themselves, nor their sins; they never understood the fiery strictness of the law, nor the spirituality of the Gospel. Now, though this error is most gross and notorious among papists, yet there is something of the same spirit, that leavens and infects the duties of most professors, who in all their works of repent-

ANTH.

ance, sorrow, and humiliation for sin, are too apt secretly to think in their hearts that they make God some amends for their sins. And the reason of this is, because it is natural to all men to be self-justiciaries, and to place a justifying power in themselves, and to conceive a more than ordinary value and excellency in their own works, but especially such works as are religious. But this conception is of all others the most dangerous to the soul, and dishonourable to God, as being absolutely and diametrically opposite to the tenor of the Gospel, and that which evacuates the death and satisfaction of Christ: for it causes us, while we acknowledge a Christ, tacitly to deny the Saviour. And herein is the art and policy of the devil seen, who will keep back the sinner as long as he can from the duties of repentance and humiliation; and when he can do this no longer, he will endeavour to make him trust and confide in them. And so he circumvents us by this dilemma. He will either make us neglect our repentance or adore it; throw away our salvation by omission of duty, or place it in our duties: but let this persuasion still remain fixed upon our spirits, that repentance was enjoined the sinner as a duty, not as a recompense; and that the most that we can do for God cannot countervail the least that we have done against him.

That course which alone is able to purify us from the guilt of sin, is by applying the virtue of the blood of Christ to the soul by renewed acts of faith. We hold indeed that justification, as it is the act of God, is perfect and entire at once, and justifies the soul from all sins both past and future. Yet justification and pardoning mercy is not actually dealt forth to us after particular sins, till we repair to the death and blood of Christ by particular actings and faith upon it; which actings also of themselves cleanse not away the guilt of sin, but the virtue of Christ's blood conveyed by them to the soul: for it is that alone that is able to wash away this deep stain, and to change the hue of the spiritual Ethiopian. Nothing can cleanse the soul but that blood that redeemed the soul.

The invalidity of whatsoever we can do in order to this thing, is sufficiently demonstrated in many places of Scripture. *If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean; yet shalt*

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*thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me*, Job ix. 30, 31. He that has nothing to rinse his polluted soul with but his own penitential tears, endeavours only to purify himself in muddy water, which does not purge, but increase the stain. In Christ alone is that fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness; and in this only we must wash and bathe our defiled souls, if ever we would have them pure. In 1 John i. 7, *The blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin*. It is from his crucified side that there must issue both blood to expiate, and water to cleanse our impieties. Faith also is said to purify the heart, Acts xv. 9; but how? why, certainly as it is instrumental to bring into the soul that purifying virtue that is in Christ. Faith purifies, not as the water itself, but as the conduit that conveys the water. Again, in Rev. i. 5, Christ is said to have *washed us from our sins by his own blood*. There is no cleansing without this; so that we may use the words of the Jews, and convert an imprecation into a blessing, and pray that his blood may be upon us and upon our souls: for it is certain that it will be one way upon us, either to purge or to condemn us. DR. SOUTH.

Repentance must be wise in its application. The sinner (Luke vii. 37—50) did not go to the foot of Mount Sinai to seek for absolution under pretence of her own righteousness, and to demand justification as a reward due to her works. She was afraid, as she had reason to be, that the language of that dreadful mountain proceeding from the mouth of Divine Justice would pierce her through. Nor did she endeavour to ward off the blows of justice by covering herself with superstitious practices. She did not say *where-with shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* Micah vi. 6, 7. She did not even require priests and Levites to offer propitiatory sacrifices for her. She discerned the sophisms of error, and acknowledged the Redeemer of mankind under the veils of infirmity and poverty, that covered him. She knew, that *the blood of bulls and*

*of goats* could not purify the conscience. She knew that Jesus, sitting at table with the pharisee was the only offering, the only victim of worth sufficient to satisfy the justice of an offended God. She knew that he was *made unto sinners wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*: that his *name* was the only one *among men whereby they might be saved*. It was to Jesus Christ that she had recourse, bedewing with tears the feet of him, who was about to shed his blood for her, and receiving by an anticipated faith the benefit of the death, that he was going to suffer, she renounced dependence on every kind of satisfaction except his.

SAURIN.

So far are we from being able to make the least disposition towards repentance, before we experience the healing power of Jesus Christ, that repentance itself is even a part of the cure. And we should take it for granted, that the first tendency towards repentance and humility proceeds from God, and is the beginning of the work of God in those to whom he imparts salvation. Jesus Christ came to save those who feel their misery; but it is he who giveth this feeling. He came to save those who repent: but it is he who giveth repentance. *Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins*, Acts v. 31. *He is found of them that sought him not*, Isa. lxxv. 1. He called the publicans to repentance, and rejected the pharisees and scribes. He called a thief unto happiness, and suffered an Apostle to fall into despair. Saul was travelling to Damascus to imprison the Christians, and in the way this active leader of the band is called to be an Apostle. P. DUMOULIN.

### *The Cross of Christ the great motive to Repentance.*

THIS mourning for sin will arise from that view of its malignity and hatefulness which the cross of Christ reveals. The genuine sorrow of a penitent flows from the believing sight of a pierced Saviour. It is not so much the law as the Gospel which softens and wins the whole heart. The law convinces of sin, but the cross makes us abhor it. The law teaches us what we ought to have done, but it is

mercy which wounds and affects the soul for the breach of it. The law shows us the sinfulness of sin, but the Gospel discovers its ingratitude and baseness. We learn from the law the threatenings of God against transgression; but we see in a crucified Saviour the actual weight of the punishment we have incurred. The law instructs us in the holiness of God, but the cross exhibits the most awful and severe display of it. The law opens our malady and leaves us under it; the grace of salvation searches the disease still more deeply, and then brings the cure.

Yes, it is the sight of Christ dying for sin which makes us, not only mourn, but *be in bitterness* on account of it. This mingles gall in every sinful pleasure. This breaks and penetrates the heart. This, not only cuts off the buddings of evil, but *lays the axe to the very root of the tree*. This leads the penitent to *abhor himself, and repent in dust and ashes*. This turns his very inmost soul against all sin. This covers him with shame and confusion of face. This makes him feel that it is *an evil and a bitter thing to sin against God*. This causes him to *remember and be confounded, and never open his mouth for shame, when God is pacified towards him for all the things which he has done*. These holy compunctions of soul are far less powerful in the first period of a Christian's repentance. All true penitence indeed has something of this character. But it is afterwards, when he has been for some time under the teaching of *the Spirit of grace and supplications*, has again and again meditated on the cross, has looked with intense interest on the Saviour there, has seen the share he had in his sufferings, and yet the pardon and reconciliation which flow from them; it is then that he indeed mourns for him, *and goes out*, like Peter, and *weeps bitterly*.

REV. D. WILSON.

*True Repentance is not an act, but a habit.*

THE repentance, from which true confession proceeds, is as lasting as our existence; and it is its permanent, its abiding nature, which proves it to be the repentance which God has blessed. That sorrow for sin, which is the effect of heated passions only, will surely die away, and that, which proceeds from remorse of conscience, is seldom lasting; but that contrition, which

is lodged in the soul by the Spirit of God, nothing can destroy; no length of time can efface it, no sense of pardon can weaken it. It is indeed regulated and modified by time, and the blood of Christ, when applied to the conscience, by taking from it its bitter pangs, causes it to assume a new character; but it does not diminish its activity or strength; on the contrary, it increases both, rendering the humiliation of the believer more habitual and his contrition more deep and tender. His penitence grows in the exact degree, in which his faith and consolation abound, and never ceases growing till it is lost in the joys of heaven. And who can say that these joys will destroy it? Who can say that the Christian does not take with him into the presence of God a remembrance of his former guilt, and add to the fervour of his love and the ardour of his praise by confessing it before his throne?

Repentance then is not an act, it is a habit; not a duty to be performed once in a man's life, and then to be thought of no more, it is to be our daily work, our hourly employment. Thus, as history tells us, Peter repented; and thus David mourned. It is thus too that we ourselves shall mourn, if the arrows of the Lord have really stricken us. Through all the scenes of our life, our sins will be ever before us; and when Death is sent to us, he will find us sorrowing still. The scene of our greatest penitence will be the chamber in which we breathe our last. There may be confidence, there may be peace, there may even be triumph in our dying moments, but they will be marked with a sorrow for sin more lively than we have ever before experienced, with a lowliness of spirit inferior only to the humility of angels.

REV. C. BRADLEY.

### *Danger of delaying Repentance.*

ALAS! the folly of sinners, with all their worldly wisdom! Is it not folly, for the sake of a perishing world, to destroy an immortal soul? For a momentary gratification of the senses, to plunge into everlasting fire? For let us be sure, that if there be indeed an eternal difference by the nature of things between righteousness and unrighteousness, God, in that judgment to come, will also make a difference between the righteous and the wicked. If your worldliness will consist with this prospect, well: still let it be a sound,



ever meeting you amidst the din of the world, that there is a judgment to come! *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; but know thou, that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment,* Eccl. xi. 9. . . .

Oh that men were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end!—that they would consider that they have a latter end! that how many soever the days they give to pleasure, how high soever they climb in power and grandeur, how happy soever they may be in their friends and possessions, there is an end to all, not far distant. When that is come, how comfortless must be the state of the soul that has nothing else to look to! This is one reason why God, in his mercy, calls us away from earth, and would loosen our attachment to all things here, that we may set our affections on things above.

As we may be permitted to hope that some among us tremble at the thought of a future judgment, we entreat them not to stifle their convictions, nor increase their danger by procrastination. Say not to your faithful monitor, your own conscience, *Go thy way for this time: when I have a more convenient season I will call for thee.* Hear, conscience! What more convenient season than the present—when you have been excited, summoned, reasoned with?—Will you put it off to your death-bed? Alas! the soul has enough to do then, to support the weight of a dying body; which, after being so long the abode, the instrument, the companion of the soul, becomes a burden to it which it cannot sustain. Besides, will you give the best of your time to Satan, and leave only the remnant to God? God hath not dealt thus with you, who gave his beloved Son for you. . . .

Trifle not with God: *To-day if ye will hear his voice, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.* He is free in the dispensations of his grace, and may withhold to-morrow what he grants to-day. Therefore, *whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest,* Eccl. ix. 10. Nay, even in this world procrastination may be an evil not to be remedied: for wisdom thus speaks:—*Because I have called, and ye refused; I have*

*stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish come upon you: then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me,* Prov. i. 24—28. Though true penitents find mercy at the eleventh hour, many pray on their death-beds who are never heard; many cry for mercy, and never obtain it.

Now, therefore, while you have life, and health, and strength; while your sun is not yet gone down, nor the grave yawning for you beneath; before Time begin his ravages, and disease sap your vitals—ascend your watch-tower—contemplate the prospect—stretch your thought inward—and determine what the end shall be. You are, in one sense, the arbiters of your own destiny! God has opened the way to himself by the mediation of his Son, and by the offers of his Spirit. Through the Son, you may be forgiven—through the Spirit, sanctified. A feast is spread, to which you are invited; a river of life, of which you may drink; a crown of glory, which is your appointed reward! May God fix your hearts for glory, honour, and immortality, through Jesus Christ our Lord! . REV. H. MARTYN.

God does not usually surprise any man at once with his sore judgments; but when all his friendly admonitions are disregarded, and all the respites of his indulgent grace neglected; then his severe threatenings are suddenly discharged on the sinner's guilty head. The disciples had time enough before to rouse themselves out of their lethargy; but as they did not make use of that opportunity, they were suddenly surprised by the enemy, and they had scarce time to recollect themselves. Hardly had our blessed Saviour given them his last exhortation, when, behold, the multitude of the enemies were coming in full march upon them. Thus it was with the human race before the deluge. They had first a respite of a hundred and twenty years; to this was added the time while Noah was building and preparing the Ark; and lastly, seven days more while he was storing it with necessaries.

But no amendment or reformation ensuing, after the expiration of these three terms, we are informed *that all the fountains of the great deep were broken up*, Gen. vii. 11. Such is the case also in our days. It has been proclaimed that the great judgments of God are at hand; we have also with astonishment observed them executed on particular persons; yet no one lays them to heart. Voluptuousness, sensuality, and wickedness of every kind increase and abound, and the kind warnings and awakening calls of God are entirely disregarded. Now we may ourselves, without difficulty, calculate what will be the issue at last. The Divine chastisements will pour down like a torrent, driven by the Spirit of the Lord: and it is to be feared, that many sinners, who now imprudently delay their repentance, will, one time or other, be taken so unexpectedly as not to have time to recollect themselves; for God has already shewn his judgment on many corrupt trees, which lie as they fall. O that we may better employ our season of grace, and rightly improve the present opportunities!

RAMBACH.

#### *A Death-bed Repentance.*

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts*; and it is possible that the approach of death may make deeper impressions on you, than either sermons or pious books have made; but yet *our God is a consuming fire*. What a time is a dying illness for the receiving of such impressions! I omit those sudden and unexpected deaths, of which we have so many yearly, or rather daily examples. I omit the sudden deaths of those, who, while we were conversing and transacting business with them, were seized with violent pains, turned pale, and died, and were instantly stretched on a bier. I pass those who went to bed healthy and well, who quietly fell asleep, and whom we have found in the morning dead and cold. All these melancholy examples we omit, for one would imagine, considering your conduct, and hearing your conversation, that each of you had received a revelation to assure him of an exemption from sudden death. But what a time is a dying illness for a renovation and conversion! Would not one suppose, that those, who hope to be converted then, have always lived among immortals, and have neither heard of death, nor seen a person die? Ah! what ob-

stacles! what a world of obstacles oppose such extravagant hopes, and justify the efforts of those who endeavour to destroy them! Here is business that must be settled; a will, which must be made; a number of articles that must be discussed: there are friends who must be embraced; relations that must be dissolved; children who must be torn away; the soul must be writhen, and rent, and riven asunder with sighs and adieus. Here arise frightful ideas of death, which have never entered the mind but amidst numberless hurries of necessary business, or countless objects of deceitful pleasures; ideas of a death that hath been always considered at a distance, though so many voices have announced its approach: but the approach of which now astonishes, benumbs, and renders motionless; there the illness increases, pains multiply, agonies convulse; the whole soul, full of intolerable sensations, loses the power of seeing and hearing, thinking and reflecting. Here are medicines more intolerable than the malady, operations more violent than the agonies which they are designed to allay: there conscience, for the first time, enlightened, awaked, and alarmed, rolls in tides of remorse: the terrible remembrance of a life spent in sin; an army of irrefragable witnesses, from all parts arising, prove the guilt, and denounce a sentence of death on the departing soul. See now whether this first reflection, which authoriseth our endeavours to comfort and invigorate your souls, when you have deferred your conversion to your last hour, be inconsistent with those which we use to terrify and alarm you, when you obstinately put off your repentance to that time?

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts*; and we have neither a sufficient knowledge of other people's hearts, nor of our own, to affirm with certainty when their faculties are entirely contaminated: But yet, *our God is a consuming fire*. We know men, to whom the truth is become unintelligible, in consequence of the disguise in which they have taken the pains to clothe it; and who have accustomed themselves to palliate vice, till they are become incapable of perceiving its turpitude.

*God's thoughts are not our thoughts*, it is true; and we have seen some examples of people, who have proved, since their recovery, that they were truly converted in

sickness, and on whose account we presume that others may possibly be converted by the same mean: but yet *our God is a consuming fire*. How rare are these examples! Doth this require proof? Must we demonstrate it? You are our proofs: you, yourselves, are our demonstrations. Who of you, (I speak of those who are of mature age)—who of you hath not been sick, and thought himself in danger of death? Who hath not made resolutions in that distressing hour, and promised God to reform? The law of these exercises forbids certain details, and prohibits the naming of my hearers: but I appeal to your consciences, and, if your consciences be asleep, I appeal to the immortal God. How many of you have deposited your resolutions with us, and have solemnly engaged to renounce the world with all its sinful maxims? How many of you have imposed upon us by appearances of conversion, and have imposed upon yourselves too? How many of you should we have alleged as new examples of death-bed conversions, if God had not granted you a recovery? Are you converted indeed? Have you renounced the world and its maxims? Ah! were we to judge, by the conduct of those who have recovered, of the state of those who are dead! . . . My brethren, I dare not examine the matter, but I leave it to your meditation.

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts*; and God worketh miracles in religion as well as in nature: but yet, *our God is a consuming fire*. Who can assure himself that, having abused common grace, he shall obtain extraordinary assistances?

It is true, *God's thoughts are not our thoughts*; and there is nothing in the Holy Scriptures, which empowers us to shut the gates of heaven against a dying penitent: we have no authority to tell you, that there is no more hope for you, but that you are lost without remedy: but yet, *our God is a consuming fire*. There are hundreds of passages in our Bibles, which authorise us—what am I saying? there are hundreds of passages that command us, under the penalty of suffering all the punishments that belong to the crime, not to conceal any thing from the criminal: there are hundreds of passages which empower and enjoin us to warn you—you, who are fifty years of age; you, who are sixty; you, who are fourscore; that still to put off the work

of your conversion is a madness, an excess of inflexibility and indolence, which all the flames of hell can never expiate.

SAURIN.

Therefore consider, all ye who still make it your sole employment to fulfil the lusts of your flesh; all ye who make earthly things, as wealth, honour, ease, and voluptuousness, your supreme felicity, and act as if you had a continuing city here, and were to live in it for ever; consider that you are heaping up matter for a miserable death: and if you proceed in this beaten track, your last moments, unless the grace of God should interpose to awaken your sleeping consciences, will be attended with terrible disquietude, and inexpressible agonies of mind. Alas! how wretched will be your condition when, lifting up your eyes, you see nothing before you but horror, misery, and torture! If you look back to your former life, there all is sin, guilt, and impiety; if you look forward, behold an eternity of agonising torments and despair! Above you stands an incensed Judge; under you the abyss of hell is opened; and even within you, you will hear the clamours, and sensibly feel the stings of conscience, the silent witness and accuser of your most secret sins and evil thoughts. Do not flatter yourselves with a vain hope, or think that all may be set to rights with a few broken sighs; think not that only crying out, God be merciful to me a sinner! is a sufficient atonement for a life of impiety. Alas! repentance is too arduous, too important a work, to be thus huddled over. When the body is struggling with the pains of the distemper, and the conscience is at the same time terrified with the wrath of God, and the horrors of death, what strength can be left for such a conflict? Therefore, while you are in the days of your health, and are not deprived of an ability of sinning; in the name of Jesus Christ renounce the service of sin, and give yourselves to him who has shed his precious blood on the cross, and acquired for you a right to a blessed eternity. Settle your account with Heaven in time, that all remaining to be done on your death-bed may be, to die tranquil and serene.

As for you who have received the grace of God, be not remiss in your conflict against sin; be not negligent in perfecting

your sanctification in the fear of God. Think not that you may finish the remainder of your work on your sick-bed, and there make up any deficiency in your account, before it is finally closed. Do ye then know how many hours you will have for your preparation on your death-bed? Are ye assured that your distemper will be of such a nature, as to leave you in full possession of your understanding till the last moment? Habituate yourselves in due time to the performance of those duties, on which your mind will be employed in your last hours; so that, if the Lord be pleased to grant you time, your last hour may be an hour of triumph; and that if, on the other hand, you should be suddenly surprised by death, yet your souls shall suffer no detriment, but pass calmly into life. . . .

Look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith, and obey his divine precepts in the time of your life; and this will be the most effectual means not only for dying happily, but joyfully; so that in the hour appointed for your last in the counsel of your heavenly Father, you may say with joy, *It is finished! Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!* RAMBACH.

#### *The Pleasure of Repentance.*

It is true, that to be religious, is to live a life of repentance, and yet religious ways are pleasant, notwithstanding. It is true, that we must mourn for sin daily, and reflect with regret upon our manifold infirmities; sin must be bitter to us, and we must even loathe and abhor ourselves for the corruptions which dwell in us, and the many actual transgressions which are committed by us. We must renew our repentance daily, and every night must make some sorrowful reflections upon the transgressions of the day. But then it is not walking in the way of wisdom that creates us this sorrow, but our trifling in that way, and our turning aside out of it. If we would keep close to these ways, and pass forward in them as we ought, there would be no occasion for repentance. If we were as we should be, we should be always praising God, and rejoicing in him; but we make other work for ourselves by our own folly, and then complain that religion is unpleasant;—and whose fault is that? If we would be always loving and delighting in God, and would live a life of communion with him, we should have no oc-

casian to repent of that; but if we leave *the fountain of living waters*, and turn aside to *broken cisterns*, or the *brooks in summer*, and see cause to repent of it, we may thank ourselves. What there is of bitterness in repentance, is owing not to our religion, but to our defects and defaults in religion; and it proves that there is bitterness, not in the ways of God, but in the ways of sin, which make a penitential sorrow necessary, for the preventing of a sorrow a thousand times worse; for sooner or later sin will have sorrow. If repentance be bitter, we must not say this is occasioned through being godly, but through being sinful. *This is thy wickedness, because it is bitter.* If by sin we have made sorrow necessary, it is certainly better to mourn now, than *to mourn at the last*. To continue impenitent, is not to *put away sorrow from thy heart*, but to put it off to a worse place.

Even in repentance, if it be right, there is a true pleasure, a pleasure accompanying it. Our Saviour has said of them who thus *mourn*, not only that *they shall be comforted*, but that they *are blessed*. When a man is conscious to himself that he has done an ill thing, and what is unbecoming him, and may be hurtful to him, it is incident to him to repent of it. Now religion has found a way to put a sweetness into that bitterness. Repentance, when it is not from the influence of religion, is nothing but bitterness and horror, as Judas's was; but repentance, as it is made an act of religion, as it is one of the laws of Christ, is pleasant, because it is the raising of the spirit, and the discharging of that which is noxious and offensive. Our religion has not only taken care that penitents be not overwhelmed with an excess of sorrow, and swallowed up by it, that their sorrow do not *work death*, as the *sorrow of the world does*; but it has provided that even this bitter cup should be sweetened; and therefore we find that under the law, the sacrifices for sin were commonly attended with expressions of joy: and while the priests were sprinkling the blood of the sacrifices to make atonement, the Levites attended with psalteries and harps, for so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets. Even the day to afflict the soul is the day of atonement; and when we *receive the atonement*, we *joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ*. In giving our consent to the

atonement, we take the comfort of the atonement. The same word, in Hebrew, signifies both to comfort and to repent, because there is comfort in true repentance.

Much more after repentance, there is a pleasure flowing from it. It is a way of pleasantness, for it is the way to pleasantness. To them that mourn in Zion, that sorrow after a godly sort, God has appointed *beauty for ashes, and the oil of joy for mourning*. And the more the soul is humbled under the sense of sin, the more sensible will the comfort of pardon be; it is wounded in order to be healed. The jubilee trumpet sounded in the close of the day of soul-affliction, which proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of release.

MATT. HENRY.

Heart-felt sorrow for sin is not opposed to happiness. The example of St. Peter shows us, on the contrary, that it is the appointed means of leading the wandering sufferer back to the source of all consolation. The tears of penitence are not tears of unmingled bitterness. There is a

joy connected with them, which is as satisfying and exalting, as it is purifying and humbling. God himself has pronounced the sorrow of the poor in spirit blessed, and he has not blessed it in vain. His people taste its sweetness. Their happiest hours are those, which are spent in the exercise of penitence and faith, and while these graces are in lively exercise, they envy not the inhabitants of heaven. . . .

We have no reason therefore to mourn over those of our friends, whom the Lord has taught to weep over their manifold sins. Their spiritual sorrow sends up, as it were, a new ray of joy into the kingdom of the blessed; and if we were holy and wise like the angels, we too should rejoice over the sinner that repenteth, and his complaining and sighs would be as music in our ears. And yet it is painful to think how many of us would rather see our children and friends trifling in the most humiliating scenes of folly and sin, than see them retiring from the crowd, as the stricken deer retires from the herd, to confess their iniquities, and to mourn and to bleed alone.

REV. C. BRADLEY.

#### SECTION IX.—WHEREIN TRUE KNOWLEDGE CONSISTS.

*All Learning and Wisdom out of Christ is vain and unprofitable.*

THE great depth of the word of God keeps the real Christian ever a learner. He knows that it is impossible to reach the utmost of God's wisdom. There will be always mysteries to be unfolded, because man's comprehension is finite; at the bound of which, how wide soever it may extend, remaineth ignorance. One, who had been in the third heaven and in spirit caught up into paradise itself, where he heard unspeakable words, could only say when he treated of the divine counsels, *O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* He could stand upon the shore and taste; but all beyond was an infinite ocean.

The true disciple, however, knows enough to make him see the vanity and unprofitableness of all learning and wis-

dom (if so they may be called) out of Christ. The speculations of men are but dreams, and their pursuits but idle labours at the best, which begin and end in self, or which have no higher object than this evil world. The poor simple countryman who hath learned Christ (and many such, blessed be God, there are) can pity the pompous ignorance of those, who know almost every thing but God and the proper value of their own souls. By a logic far beyond that of the schools, he hath been led to this conclusion, that God is his Father, that Christ is his Saviour, that the Holy Spirit is his Guide, that the Bible is his charter and his library, that the devil, the world, and the flesh are his foes, that the earth is the wilderness of his banishment, that heaven is his home, and that all the favour, love, and power of the God-head are engaged to bring him hither. The worldly wise can only value this (if at all) when carnal knowledge is dying with their bodies, and all their trifling thoughts

are about to perish. Hence it is, that the poor man's knowledge being sound and true, though ever so small, can stand the onset of trials in the world, and death at last; while the self-taught, the learned, and the knowing, having none of this true understanding, fall into the absurdest errors, fail in their course, and frequently go off at last doubting and despairing.

O, my soul, seek thou the substantial wisdom which cometh from God, and which neither time, nor eternity itself, can diminish, but only brighten and improve. Though other knowledge may be valuable for the purposes of this world, yet this alone can ripen for heaven, and is therefore most earnestly to be sought for by thee, whose business and calling, whose citizenship and hope, are principally there.

AMB. SERLE.

But God who created man for the enjoyment of himself, hath happily accomplished his eternal decree, by the work of our redemption, wherein his own glory is most visible. And the Gospel which reveals this to us, humbles whom it justifies, and comforts those that were condemned; it abases more than the law, but without despair; and advances more than nature could, but without presumption. The Mediator takes away the guilt of our old sins, and our inclination to new sins. We are not only restored, but exalted, made *heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ*, Rom. viii. 17. For these reasons the Apostle sets so high a value upon the heavenly doctrine that reveals a Saviour to the undone world. He desires to *know nothing but Jesus Christ, and him crucified*, 1 Cor. ii. 2. He despiseth all pharisaical and philosophical learning *in comparison of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus*, Phil. iii. 8. Other knowledge swells the mind, and increases the esteem of ourselves; this gives us a sincere view of our state. It discovers our misery in its causes, and the almighty mercy that saves us. Other knowledge enlightens the understanding without changing the heart, but this inspires us with the love of God, with hatred of sin, and makes us truly better. In seeking after other knowledge, the mind is perplexed by endless inquiries; here it is at rest, as the wavering needle is fixed when turned towards the north. Ignorance of other things may be without any real damage to us, for we may

be directed by the skilful how to preserve life and estate; but this knowledge is absolutely necessary to justify, sanctify, and save us. All other knowledge is useless at the hour of death; then the richest stock of learning is lost, the vessel being split wherein the treasure was laid; but this pearl of inestimable price is both the ornament of our prosperity, and the support of our adversity. A little ray of this is infinitely more desirable, than the light of all human sciences in their lustre and perfection.

And what an amazing folly is it, that men who are possessed with an earnest passion of knowing, should waste their time and strength in searching after things, the knowledge of which cannot remove the evils that oppress them, and be careless of the saving knowledge of the Gospel! Were there no other reason to diminish the esteem of earthly knowledge, but the difficulty of its acquisition, that error often surprises those who are searching after truth, this might check our intemperate pursuit of it. Sin hath not only shortened our understandings, but our lives, so that we cannot arrive to the perfect discovery of inferior objects. But suppose that one, by his vast mind, should comprehend all created things, from the centre of the earth to the circumference of the heavens, and were not savingly enlightened in the mystery of our redemption, with all his knowledge he would be a prey to Satan, and increase the triumphs of hell. The historian Pliny upbraids the Roman luxury, that with so much cost and hazard they should send to foreign parts for trees that were beautiful but barren, and produced a shadow only without fruit. With greater reason we may wonder, that men should, with the expense of their precious hours, purchase barren curiosities, which are unprofitable to their last end. How can a condemned criminal, who is in suspense between life and death, attend to study the secrets of nature and art, when all his thoughts are taken up how to prevent the execution of the sentence? And it is no less than a prodigy of madness, that men who have but a short and uncertain space allowed them to escape the wrath to come, should rack their brains in studying things impertinent to salvation, and neglect the knowledge of a Redeemer: especially when there is so clear a revelation of him. The righteousness of faith doth not command us to ascend to the heavens,

or descend into the deep to make a discovery of it; but the word is nigh us, that discovers the certain way to a happy immortality, Rom. x. 6, 7. Seneca, a philosopher and a courtier, valued his being in the world only upon this account, that he might contemplate the starry heaven. He saw only the visible beauty of the firmament, but was ignorant of the glory within it, and of the way that leads to it; yet, to our shame, he speaks that the sight of it made him despise the earth, and without the contemplation of the celestial bodies, he esteemed his continuance in the world not the life of a man, but the toil of a beast. 'Quid erat cur in numero viventium me positum esse gauderem? an ut cibos et potum percolarem? ut hoc corpus casurum, ac fluidum, periturumque nisi subinde impleatur, farcirem? et viverem ægri minister? ut morti timerem cui omnes nascimur? Detrahe hoc inestimabile bonum; non est vita tanti uti sudem, ut æstuem. O quam contempta res est homo nisi supra humana se erexerit!' But what transports had he been in, if he had been acquainted with the contrivance of our redemption, the admirable order of its parts, and the beauty that results from the composition of the whole! But we that with open face may in the glass of the Gospel behold the glory of the Lord, turn away our eyes from it to vanity. Here the complaint is more just: 'Ad sapientium quis accedit? quis dignam judicat, nisi quam in transitu noverit?' We content ourselves with slight and transient glances, but do not seriously and fixedly consider this blessed design of God, upon which the beginning of our happiness in this, and the perfection of it in the next life, is built. Let us provoke ourselves by the example of the angels who are not concerned in this redemption as man is; for they continued in their fidelity to their Creator, and were always happy in his favour; and where there is no alienation between parties, reconciliation is unnecessary; yet they are students with us in the same book, and unite all their powers in the contemplation of this mystery: they are represented stooping to pry into these secrets, to signify their delight in what they know, and their desire to advance in the knowledge of them, 1 Pet. i. 12. With what intention then should we study the Gospel, who are the subject and end of it! DR. BATES.

*Christ crucified* is the library which tri-

umphant souls will be studying in to all eternity. This is the only library, which is the true *ιαρπειον ψυχης*, that which cures the soul of all its maladies and distempers: other knowledge makes men's minds giddy and flatulent; this settles and composes them: other knowledge is apt to swell men into high conceits and opinions of themselves; this brings them to the truest view of themselves, and thereby to humility and sobriety: other knowledge leaves men's hearts as it found them; this alters them, and makes them better. So transcendent an excellency is there in the *knowledge of Christ crucified* above the sublimest speculations in the world!

BF. STILLINGFLEET.

### *Test of a True Knowledge of Christ.*

WOULD we know whether we know Christ aright, let us consider whether the life of Christ be in us. He that hath not the life of Christ in him, he hath nothing but the name, nothing but a fancy of Christ; he hath not the substance of him. He that builds his house upon this foundation, not an airy notion of Christ swimming in his brain, but Christ really dwelling and living in his heart, as our Saviour himself witnesseth, he buildeth his house upon a rock, and when the floods come, and the winds blow, and the rain descends, and beats upon it, it shall stand impreguably. But he that builds all his comfort in an ungrounded persuasion that God from all eternity hath loved him, and absolutely decreed him to life and happiness, and seeketh not for God really dwelling in his soul; he builds his house upon a quicksand, and it shall suddenly sink and be swallowed up: *His hope shall be cut off, and his trust shall be a spider's web; he shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand; he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure.*

We are nowhere commanded to pry into these secrets, but the wholesome counsel and advice given us is this, to *make our calling and election sure*. We have no warrant in Scripture to peep into these hidden rolls and volumes of eternity, and to make it our first thing that we do when we come to Christ, to spell out our names in the stars, and to persuade ourselves that we are certainly elected to everlasting happiness, before we see the image of God, in righteousness and true holiness, shaped in our hearts. God's everlasting decree is too dazzling and bright an object

for us at first to set our eye upon. It is far easier and safer for us to look upon the rays of his goodness and holiness as they are reflected in our hearts, and there to read the mild and gentle characters of God's love to us, in our love to him, and our hearty compliance with his heavenly will: as it is safer for us, if we would see the sun, to look upon it here below in a pail of water, than to cast up our daring eyes upon the body of the sun itself, which is too radiant and scorching for us. The best assurance that any one can have of his interest in God, is doubtless the conformity of his soul to him. Those divine purposes, whatsoever they be, are altogether unsearchable and unknowable by us; they lie wrapt up in everlasting darkness, and covered in a deep abyss: Who is able to fathom the bottom of them?

Let us ~~not~~ therefore make this our first attempt towards God and religion, to persuade ourselves strongly of these everlasting decrees: for if at our first flight we aim so high, we shall haply but scorch our wings, and be struck back with lightning, as those giants of old were that would needs attempt to assault Heaven. And it is indeed a most gigantical essay, to thrust ourselves so boldly into the lap of Heaven; it is the prank of a Nimrod, of a mighty hunter, thus rudely to deal with God, and to force Heaven and happiness before his face, whether he will or no. The way to obtain a good assurance indeed of our title to heaven is, not to clamber up to it by a ladder of our own ungrounded persuasions, but to dig as low as hell by humility and self-denial in our own hearts: and though this may seem to be the farthest way about, yet it is indeed the nearest and safest way to it. We must *ἀναβαλεῖν κάτω*, and *καταβαλεῖν ἄνω*, as the Greek epigram speaks, ascend downward, and descend upward, if we would indeed come to heaven, or get any true persuasion of our title to it.

The most gallant and triumphant confidence of a Christian riseth safely and surely on this low foundation, that lies deeper under ground, and there stands firmly and steadfastly. When our heart is once tuned into a conformity with the word of God, when we feel our will perfectly to concur with his will, we shall then presently perceive a *spirit of adoption* within ourselves, teaching us to cry *Abba, Father*. We shall not then care for peeping into

those hidden records of eternity, to see whether our names be written there in golden characters: no, we shall find a copy of God's thoughts concerning us written in our own breasts. There we may read the characters of his favour to us; there we may feel an inward sense of his love to us, flowing out of our hearty and unfeigned love to him. And we shall be more undoubtedly persuaded of it, than if any of those winged watchmen above, that are privy to Heaven's secrets, should come and tell us that they saw our names enrolled in those volumes of eternity. Whereas, on the contrary, though we strive to persuade ourselves never so confidently, that God from all eternity hath loved us, and elected us to life and happiness; if we do yet in the mean time entertain any iniquity within our hearts, and willingly close with any lust: do what we can, we shall find many a cold qualm ever now and then seizing upon us at approaching dangers; and when death itself shall grimly look us in the face, we shall feel our hearts even to die within us, and our spirits quite faint away, though we strive to raise them and recover them never so much with the strong waters and aquavitee of our own ungrounded presumptions. The least inward lust willingly continued in will be like a worm, fretting the gourd of our jolly confidence and presumptuous persuasion of God's love, and always gnawing at the root of it; and though we strive to keep it alive, and continually besprinkle it with some dews of our own, yet it will be always dying and withering in our bosoms. But a good conscience within will be always better to a Christian than *health to his navel, and marrow to his bones*; it will be an everlasting cordial to his heart; it will be softer to him than a bed of down, and he may sleep securely upon it in the midst of raging and tempestuous seas, when the winds bluster, and the waves beat round about him. A good conscience is the best looking-glass of heaven; in which the soul may see God's thoughts and purposes concerning it, as so many shining stars reflected to it. *Hereby we know Christ, hereby we know that Christ loves us, if we keep his commandments.* CUDWORTH.

*The end of Literature is to remove part of that Curse derived from the Fall.*

THE particular end of literature (though not observed by many, men's eyes being



fixed on false ends, which compels them in their progress *aberrare a scopo*) is none other, but to remove some part of that curse which is come upon us by sin. Learning is the product of the soul's struggling with the curse for sin. Adam, at his first creation, was completely furnished with all that knowledge (excepting only things not then in being, neither in themselves, nor any natural causes, as that which we now call tongues, and those things that are the subject of story) as far as it lies in a needful tendency to the utmost end of man, which we now press after. There was no straitness, much less darkness upon his understanding, that should make him sweat for a way to improve, and make out those general conceptions of things which he had. For his knowledge of nature, it is manifest from his imposition of suitable names to all the creatures, (the particular reasons of the most of which to us are lost,) wherein, from the approbation given of his nomination of things in the Scripture, and the significance of what yet remains evident; it is most apparent it was done upon a clear acquaintance with their natures. Hence Plato could observe that he was most wise that first imposed names on things, yea, had more than human wisdom. Were the wisest men living, yea, a general collection of all the wise men in the world, to make an experiment of their skill and learning, in giving names to all living creatures suitable to their natures, and expressive of their qualities, they would quickly perceive the loss they have incurred. Adam was made perfect, for the whole end of ruling the creatures, and living to God for which he was made; which, without the knowledge of the nature of the one, and the will of the other, he could not be. All this being lost by sin, a multiplication of tongues also being brought in as a curse for and after rebellion (Gen. xi. 3, &c.); the whole design of learning is but to disentangle the soul from this issue of sin. Ignorance, darkness, and blindness, is come upon the understanding; acquaintance with the works of God, spiritual and natural, is lost; strangeness of communication is given by multiplication of tongues. Tumultuating of passions and affections, with innumerable darkening prejudices, are also come upon us. To remove and take this away, to disentangle the mind in its reasonings,

to recover an acquaintance with the works of God, to subduct the soul from under the effects of the curse of division of tongues, is the aim and tendency of literature.

DR. OWEN.

*Advantages of early Education, and what it ought to be.*

RELIGIOUS education should be begun in the dawn of childhood. The earliest days, after intelligence is fairly formed in the mind, are incomparably the best for this purpose. The child should be taught, as soon as he is capable of understanding the instructions which are to be communicated. Nothing should be suffered to pre-occupy the place which is destined to truth. If the intellect is not filled with sound instruction as fast as it is capable of receiving it, the enemy, who never neglects to *sow tares*, when parents are *asleep*, will imperceptibly fill it with a dangerous and noxious growth. The great and plain doctrines of religion should be taught so early, that the mind should never remember when it began to learn, or when it was without this knowledge. Whenever it turns a retrospective view upon the preceding periods of its existence, these truths should seem always to have been in its possession, to have the character of innate principles, to have been inwoven in its nature, and to constitute a part of all its current of thinking.

In this manner the best security which is in the power of man will be furnished against the introduction and admission of dangerous errors. The principles of infidelity have little support in argument or evidence; but they easily take deep root in the inclinations of the mind, and hold but too frequently a secure possession of its faith by the aid of passion and prejudice. No human method of preventing this evil is so effectual as engrossing the assent to evangelical truth, when the mind is absolutely clear from every prepossession. A faith thus established, all the power of sophistry will be unable to shake. In the same manner ought its religious impressions to be begun. No period should be within the future reach of the memory, when they had not begun. Every child easily imbibes at this period a strong and solemn reverence for his Creator; easily realises his universal presence, and the inspection of his all-seeing eye; admits without difficulty, and without reluctance,

that he is an awful and unchangeable enemy of sin; and feels, that he himself is accountable to this great Being for all his conduct. The conscience also is at this period exceedingly tender and susceptible; readily alarmed by the apprehension of guilt, and prepared to contend, or to fly, at the approach of a known temptation. All the affections also are easily moved, and fitted to retain permanently, and often indelibly, whatever impressions are made. The heart is soft, gentle, and easily won; strongly attached by kindness, peculiarly to the parents themselves, and generally to all others with whom it is connected. To every amiable, every good thing it is drawn comparatively without trouble or resistance; and united by bands, which no future art or force can dissolve. Against every odious and bad thing its opposition is with equal ease excited, and rendered permanent. Its sensibility to praise for laudable actions is exquisite; and no less exquisite its dread of blame for conduct which is unworthy. Its hope also of future enjoyment, and its fear of future suffering are awakened in a moment, without labour, by obvious considerations, and with a strength which renders them powerful springs of action.

This susceptibility, this tenderness of heart and of conscience, constitute a most interesting, desirable, and useful preparation of the mind to receive evangelical truths, and religious impressions, and invest it with all the beauty and fertility of spring. Almost every thing which the eye discerns is then fair, delightful, and promising. Let no person to whom God has committed the useful, honourable, and happy employment of cultivating minds, be idle at this auspicious season. On faithful, wise, and well directed labours busily employed at this period of the human year, the mildest winds of heaven breathe, its most fertilising showers descend, and its softest and most propitious sunshine sheds its happy influence. He who loses this golden season will, when the autumn arrives, find nothing in his fields but barrenness and death.

Nor is this period less happily fitted for the establishment of useful moral habits, as has been heretofore observed, are the result of custom or repetition, and may in this manner be formed at any age. But in early childhood the

susceptibility is so great, and the feeling so tender, that a few repetitions will generate habitual feeling. Every impression at this period is deep. When these therefore are made through a moderate succession, the combined effect can rarely be effaced. Thus good habits are soon, and durably established, and all that course of trouble prevented, of which parents so justly and bitterly complain, when this work is to be done at future seasons of life.

But habits constitute the man. Good habits form a good man, and evil habits an evil man. Subtract these from the character, and it will be difficult to conceive what will be left. It is plain, therefore, that habits are of supreme importance to the well-being of the child, his character, his all. Of course, the establishment of those which are good is the first object of parental duty. . . .

In a religious education the Scriptures only should be taught. The youngest mind which can perceive moral truth at all, clearly discerns that no doctrines can be invested with an importance, comparable to that of the doctrines taught by God. The character of this great and awful Being is seen by the humblest intelligent creature to be immeasurably distant from every other. This distinction, of supreme consequence in itself, should be preserved in its full force by the parent throughout all his instructions. Religious truth, that is, whatever is an obligatory object of faith, or rule of duty, whatever 'pertains to life and to godliness,' is wholly and only taught by God. This great doctrine should be originally impressed on the early mind; and should afterwards be never suffered to escape from its attention. Scriptural truths should, for this reason, be clearly distinguished at every period as the unquestioned word of God, and come to the child with the sanction of divine authority. In this method the child will imbibe a reverence for these truths, entirely peculiar; and, if no human opinions be mingled with them in the instruction, will carry it through life. A little mixture of philosophy, however, will in a great measure prevent this desirable effect; and imperceptibly lower the Scriptures from their supreme dignity, and inestimable importance, down to the humble level of mere human opinion.

DR. DWIGHT.

## SECTION X.—ON PRAYER.

*The nature of Prayer.*

PRAYER is not a smooth expression, or a well-contrived form of words; not the product of a ready memory, or of a rich invention exerting itself in the performance. These may draw a neat picture of it, but still the life is wanting. The motion of the heart God-wards, holy and divine affection, makes prayer real, and lively, and acceptable to the living God, to whom it is presented; the pouring out of thy heart to him who made it, and therefore hears it, and understands what it speaks, and how it is moved and affected in calling on him. It is not the gilded paper and good writing of a petition, that prevails with a king, but the moving sense of it. And to that King who discerns the heart, heart-sense is the sense of all, and that which only he regards: he listens to hear what that speaks, and takes all as nothing where that is silent. All other excellence in prayer is but the outside and fashion of it; this is the life of it.

Though prayer, precisely taken, is only petition, yet, in its fuller and usual sense, it comprehends the venting of our humble sense of vileness and sin, in sincere confession, and the extolling and praising of the holy name of our God, his excellency and goodness, with thankful acknowledgment of received mercies. Of these sweet ingredient perfumes is the incense of prayer composed, and by the Divine fire of love it ascends unto God, the heart and all with it; and when the hearts of the saints unite in joint prayer, the pillar of sweet smoke goes up the greater and the fuller. Thus says that song of the Spouse—*Going up from the wilderness, as pillars of smoke perfumed with myrrh and frankincense, and all the powders of the merchant*, Cant. iii. 6. The word there, (*timeroth* from *temer*, a palm-tree,) signifies straight pillars, like the tallest, straightest kind of trees. And, indeed, the sincerity and unfeignedness of prayer, makes it go up as a straight pillar, no crookedness in it, tending straight towards heaven, and bowing to no side by the way. Oh! the single and fixed viewing of God,

as it, in other ways, is the thing which makes all holy and sweet, so particularly does it in this divine work of prayer.

LEIGHTON.

Prayer is not an exertion of the mind, an arrangement of ideas, a profound knowledge of the mysteries and counsels of God; it is a simple emotion of the heart; it is a lamentation of the soul, deeply affected at the sight of its own wretchedness; it is a keen and inward feeling of our wants and of our weakness, and a humble confidence which it lays before its Lord, in order to obtain relief and deliverance from them. Prayer supposes, in the soul which prays, neither great lights, uncommon knowledge, nor a mind more cultivated and exalted than that of the rest of men; it supposes only more faith, more contrition, and a warmer desire of deliverance from its temptations and from its wretchedness. Prayer is neither a secret nor a science which we learn from men; nor is it an art, or private method, upon which it is necessary to consult skilful teachers, in order to be master of its rules and precepts. . . . Prayer is a duty upon which we are all born instructed: the rules of this divine science are written solely in our hearts; and the Spirit of God is the sole master to teach it.

A soul, who is penetrated with the greatness of God, struck with the terror of his judgments, touched with his infinite mercies, who only knows to humble himself before him, to acknowledge, in the simplicity of his heart, his goodness and wonders, to adore the orders of his providence upon him, to accept before him of the crosses and afflictions imposed upon him by the wisdom of his councils; who knows no prayer more sublime than to be sensible before God of all the corruption of his heart; to groan over his own hardness of heart, and opposition to all good; to entreat of him, with fervent faith, to change him, to destroy in him the *man of sin*, which, in spite of his firmest resolves, continually forces him to make so many false steps in the ways of God: a soul of this description is a thousand times more

instructed in the knowledge of prayer than all the teachers themselves, and may say, with the prophet, *I have more understanding than all my teachers.* He speaks to his God as a friend to a friend; he is sorry for having offended him; he upbraids himself for not having, as yet, sufficient force to renounce all to please him; he takes no pride in the sublimity of his thoughts; he leaves his heart to speak, and gives way to all its tenderness before the only object of his love. Even when his mind wanders, his heart watches and speaks for him: his very disgusts become a prayer, through the feelings which are then excited in his heart: he is tenderly affected, he sighs, he is displeased with, and a burden to, himself: he feels the weight of his bonds, he exerts himself as if to break and throw them off; he a thousand times renews his protestations of fidelity; he blushes and is ashamed at always promising, and yet being continually faithless: such is the whole secret and the whole science of prayer.

MASSILLON.

Prayer is the breath of the new creature, and the sign of a spiritual life. Christians, let your prayers be secret, sincere, fervent, and constant. 'The way to heaven,' said a good man, 'is through the closet, and they that have been eminent in piety have been excellent in prayer. Holy David would not let a morning pass without prayer; yea, three times a day he was at this blessed duty. It was his element and constant employment. Your prayer must be fervent, if it be effectual. Prayer without fervency, is a bullet without powder, or as a bird without wings, that cannot mount up into the air. Holy fire must be put to thy daily sacrifice. God answers by fire. He that looks upon the heart, regards the manner of your prayers more than the number of your prayers. Cold slight mumbling over a few petitions, either out of custom, or to stop the voice of conscience, will not avail. Christians, the time that you spend with God in secret, is the sweetest time, and best improved. Therefore, if thou lovest thy life, be in love with prayer. Resolve to spend some time with God in private every day.

JOHN FOX.

### *The Spirit of Prayer.*

How may we know when a soul gets near the seat of God in prayer?

I answer, there will be some or all these attendants of nearness to God.

1. There will be an inward sense of the several glories of God, and suitable exercises of grace in the soul. For when we get near to God, we see him, we are in his presence; he is then, as it were, before the eyes of the soul, even as the soul is at all times before the eyes of God. There will be something of such a spiritual sense of the presence of God, as we shall have when our souls are dismissed from the prison of this flesh, and see him face to face, though in a far less degree: it is something that resembles the future vision of God in the blessed world of spirits; and those souls who have had much intimacy with God in prayer, will tell you that they know in some measure what heaven is. The soul, when it gets near to God, even to his seat, beholds several of his glories displayed there; for it is a seat of *majesty*, a seat of *judgment*, and a seat of *mercy*. . . .

I proceed now to the second sign or attendant of holy nearness to God in prayer.

2. When a soul comes near to God in prayer, there will generally be some sweet taste of the special love of God, and warm returns of love again to God from the soul. The soul that comes near to God, is not satisfied merely with low degrees of faith and hope, with some feeble dependence, and some faint expectations of mercy; it can hardly leave God till it has an assurance. Faith and hope in the mercy of God, are different from that joy that arises from the immediate sensations of divine love. The Psalmist, in Psalm lxxiii. 1, 2, &c. seems to have a reference to both these particulars together, which I have already mentioned. *My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee;—to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.* I have seen thee in the sanctuary as sitting upon a throne of majesty, on a seat of judgment and of grace; I have seen thy power and thy glory there; and I have seen something more than this, I have tasted some special loving-kindness, and that *loving-kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee.* I have had a sense of the special love of God shed abroad in my soul, I have known his love is exercised toward me, therefore my soul is full of praise. God will seldom let a soul that is got so near

him by holy labour and fervency of spirit, go away merely with hope and dependence, without some sacred delight and joy.

A saint that has drawn near to God in worship will tell you his own rich experiences, and say, 'When I found him whom my soul loveth, I was constrained to break forth into these sweet expressions, *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine*; for I love him above all things, and *my love is but the effect of his*. In that blessed hour I felt, and I was assured of that mutual relation between God and me: I found so much of his image stamped on me, that I knew I was the Lord's; whence I rejoice in the full persuasion of his love. I know he loves me, *for his sanctifying Spirit hath witnessed with my spirit, that I am one of his children*; and I know that I love him, for my spirit witnesseth also as an echo to his Spirit, that I have chosen him for my Father, my Ruler, and my God, and have surrendered myself to him on his own terms; and I address him as *my Father*, with words of the choicest affection, and of most endeared sentiments of soul.'

When a person, in whom grace is wrought, gets so near to God, and sees this God in his own loveliness, and in his kindest passions, there are some new divine passions kindled in the soul towards this God, towards this first beauty, towards this original of all perfection and goodness; and God will seldom let one come so near him, without shewing him the love of his heart; and the name of the devout worshipper graven, as it were, *on the palms of his hands*, or in the book of his mercy. He speaks to the soul in his own divine language, *Son, or daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee. O man, thou art greatly beloved. I am your God, and you are my people. I have bought thee dear, and thou art mine. I have created thee, O Jacob; I have formed thee, O Israel; I have redeemed thee, O believer, and thou art for ever mine*. And such discoveries of the love of God to the soul draw out still more love from the soul towards God, and raise more sacred exercises of divine love in one hour, than a whole year of common devotions can do; and the saint learns more of this sacred sensation of the love of God, than years of cold and common devotions would teach him.

3. When the soul gets near to God in

prayer, there will be a hatred of sin at the very thoughts of it, and holy meltings and mournings under the remembrance of its own sins. 'How hateful does sin appear,' will the soul say, 'now I am come so near to the seat of a holy God! Never did I see sin in so dark and so odious colours, as this hour reveals and discovers to me; never did I so sensibly behold the abomination that is in all sins as now I do; I never saw it so contrary to all that is in God, to his holiness, to his glory, to his justice, and to his grace. O wretch that I am, that I should ever have indulged iniquity! That I should ever have borne with such an infinite evil in my heart! That I should ever take delight in such mischief against God! Now I hate and abhor myself because of sin. *O that my head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night*, because I have been such a sinner so long, and because I am so much a sinner still!' The heart of a saint that comes near to God is pained at the memory of old sins, and together with a present sweetness of divine love, there is a sort of anguish at the thoughts of past iniquities. A present God will make past sins look dreadful and heinous; therefore it is that sin looks so little to us, and appears so light a thing, because we seldom get near to the seat of God, and bring our iniquities to that divine light. . . .

4. At such a time there is a power and virtue enters into the soul, coming from a present God, to resist sin, and to oppose great temptation. *I can do all things, if Christ be near to strengthen me*, says the Apostle, Phil. iv. 13. When I was afflicted with the buffeting of Satan, says the same Apostle, 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9, for this I applied myself to the mercy-seat, and I got near to the throne of grace; there I pleaded with my God, and I received this answer from him, *My grace is sufficient for thee*. Then, says he, *I could glory in infirmities and in persecutions for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong*; when I feel my own weakness, and see Almighty strength near me, and engaged on my side, then I grow strong in courage, and with success encounter my most powerful adversaries. *I will not fear*, says David, *though thousands have set themselves against me, if thou art with me, my Strength, and my Rock: I will walk through the valley of the shadow of death, and fear no*

*evil, for thou art with me*, Psal. xxiii. 4. Divine courage and fortitude are increased abundantly by coming so near to the throne of God.

There is a zeal for God enters into the soul at such a season, and the soul is more desirous to lay out itself for the glory of God at such a time. Moses had drawn near to God in the mount, and had been with him forty days; when he came down from the mount, he beheld the people filled with idolatry, and he brake the tables of stone in an impatience of zeal; his zeal for God was so great, he hardly knew what he did; his zeal for God was kindled high, because he had been so near to God, and just conversing with him. So Isa. vi. 8, when that great saint had been near to God, and had seen him in the glories of his holiness, and had some courage and confidence in his love; 'Now I will go,' says he, 'upon any difficult message; *here am I, send me*, though it be to fulfil the hardest service.'

There will be generally all these attendants of great nearness to God, namely, power against temptation, strength against sin, zeal for the glory of God in the world, and ability to perform difficult duties.

5. There will be a spiritual frame introduced into the heart, and a distance from all carnal things. 'Stand by,' saith the soul to all this world, 'whilst I go to seek my God; but when I have found him, then the world of itself, as to all the temporal concerns of it, vanishes and goes out of sight. When I get so near to heaven, this earth is so small a point, that it cannot be seen, and those comforts among the creatures, that were fair as the moon, or bright as the larger stars, are vanished and lost, and disappear under the brighter light of this Sun.' Created beauties, with all their little glimmerings, tempt the soul toward them, when God is absent; as a twinkling candle entices the silly fly at midnight to hover about the rays of it: but the candle faints under the broad beams of rising daylight; it has no power to attract those little buzzing insects in the morning, and it is quite invisible at noon. So the very approach of God makes creatures appear more contemptible and worthless in the esteem of a devout Christian; a God near at hand will drive the creatures afar off; and a present God will command the world to utter absence. None of the tempting vanities of life come in sight, and some-

times not the most important concerns of it remain before the eye of the saint, when God appears, and fills the view and prospect of his spirit. The soul is taken up with spiritual things, therefore carnal ones vanish; it is entertained and filled with the majesty of God, the riches of grace, redeeming grace; with the glory of Christ Jesus, the beauty of his person, the honour of his characters, his various excellencies, and the supereminence of his offices, both in the constitution and discharge of them; the soul is then warmed with a zealous concern for the church of Christ, and big with designs for the honour of God, while it forgets the world.

Or at such a season as this, when we get near to God in prayer, if we think of any of the creatures, it is all in order to the honour of God. If I think of a brother, or father, or child, 'O may they all be instruments in thine hand, for thy honour here among men, and for ever among blessed angels.' The soul does not ask for riches and glories on earth for them; but, 'may they live in thy sight, O Lord!' If it thinks of the comforts of life, or blessings of prosperity, 'O let *holiness to the Lord* be written upon them all; for I would not have one of them, but what may subserve thine honour in the world!' If the soul thinks of its pain, and sorrows, and reproaches, it longs for the sanctification of them at present, and the removal of them in due season, that it may serve its God the better. Thus the soul is, as it were, taken out of *self*, when it gets near to God.

'Let me have the conveniencies of life,' says the Christian, 'not so much for my ease, as that I may better advance thine honour.' The soul grows weaned from self at such a time; it breaks out of the narrow circle of self, when it gets nigh to God. If it thinks of the ministry or of ordinances, 'Lord, let that ministry be for the advancement of thy name! Lord, let these ordinances be for the increase of thy glory in the world, for the advancement of grace in my heart, and bring me nearer to heaven! If it thinks of the kingdom, or the parliament, powers or princes in this world, it is with this design, that God may be glorified in the courts of princes, and in parliaments, and honoured in armies and nations, known and unknown.' Thus the soul always keeps within sight of God; it still keeps all its designs within the circle of God, and aims

still at the glories of its heavenly Father. If it thinks of life or of death, 'I would not ask life,' says the saint, 'but to glorify thee; nor death, but to glorify thee better, and to enjoy more of thee.'

Thus, when the soul is near to God, it is in a divine light that it sees all things, it is still with a design for God; and when it indulges the thoughts toward any creature, it is without turning aside a moment from its God. Thus carnal things are taken into the mind, and spiritualised by the presence of God, the infinite Spirit, when the soul approaches so near to his seat.

6. There will then be a fixedness of heart in duty without wandering, and liveliness without tiring. At other times of common and usual worship, when the saint is in too formal and too cold a frame, the heart roves perpetually, and is soon weary; but when we get near to God, then we have a little emblem of heaven within us, where they worship God day and night without interruption and without weariness. When we wait upon God at this rate, we are still mounting up higher and higher, *as with eagles' wings; we walk first without fainting, and then run without wearying; at last, we fly as an eagle*, and make haste to the fuller possession of our God, Isa. xl. 31. The soul is then detained in the presence of God with overpowering delight, and it cannot be taken away from the object of its dearest satisfaction. This is a joy above all other joys, above all the joys of sense, above all the joys of the intellectual world that are not divine and holy. There are some pleasures that arise from philosophical and intellectual notions, that are superior to the pleasures of sense; but the pleasure of being near to God in devotion far transcends all these.

Animal nature, at such a season, may be worn out, and faint and die under it; but the mind is not weary. It is possible for divine transports to rise so high as to break this feeble frame of flesh, and dissolve it; and there have been instances of persons that have been near to a dissolution of mortality under the power of divine ecstasies; but the soul has not been faint, has felt no weariness.

There are at such a season most pleasurable thoughts of heaven; there are some bright glimpses of that blessed state when a Christian attains this nearness to God; for heaven is a state of nearness to God, everlasting and uninterrupted; nor

are the blessed inhabitants of that world ever weary of their company, or their business; and thus, when there is any thing akin to heaven brought down to the saints in this mortal state, they know it cannot be uninterrupted and perpetual; and therefore there is a desire of frequent returns of such seasons as these are, while they are here on earth. And as Christ, the bridegroom, speaks to his saints in the language of Solomon, *Let me see thy face often, my spouse, my beloved, let me hear thy voice*, Song ii. 14, and viii. 13, so the saint says to his God at such a season, 'O may I often see thy face in this manner! may I often hear such a voice as this is from thee, for I know not how to live without it!' Flee, my beloved Saviour, and make haste to a speedy return, and let there be an uninterrupted and everlasting converse between God and my soul.

*Lastly*, There is at such a season oftentimes a pouring out of the soul before God, with some freedom in the gift, as well as the grace of prayer. Mere sighs and groans are for persons at a distance; but when we get near to God, we speak to him even in his ear; and the heart is full, and the tongue overflows.

I grant there may be the spirit of prayer assisting a poor soul that cannot get near to God, but still cries after him, when he is hidden, and expresses itself only in *sighs and in groanings unutterable*; so the Apostle tells us, Rom. viii. 26, *The Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered*. And thus it may be, while God hides himself, while there is a veil concealing God from our eyes, while there is any special temptation, like a mountain, that separates between God and our souls, he may send his Spirit to work us up to earnest desires and longings after him.

But when this *Spirit of Prayer* has brought the soul near, when God has been pleased to turn aside the veil, to remove the mountain, and to discover himself in all his glory, beauty, and love, then there will be generally the *gift of prayer* also in exercise by the assistance of the promised Spirit; and such persons many times are able to address themselves to God with much freedom, and to pour out the soul before God in proper words, notwithstanding at other times they appear to have but weak capacities. When they have such affecting sights of their own sin and guilt;

and such surprising views of the mercy of God manifested in them in particular, and at the same time when they look upon all things round them with a design for the glory of God; they are both naturally and divinely taught to pour out their souls before God, and represent their cares and circumstances to him in affecting language.

I must conclude this discourse before I proceed to the other heads which were proposed: but I would not willingly leave it without a caution or two, and one reflection.

The first *caution* is this: 'Let not the humble mourning Christian, who walks carefully with God, under much darkness and fear, charge himself with utter distance and estrangement from the throne of grace, because he does not feel all these sacred passions and powers of nature in lively exercise, while he bows his knees before the Lord:' for I have described this blessed privilege in the sublime glory and beauty of it, so as it has been often attained and enjoyed by persons eminent in grace and religion, and especially such as have had lively affections, and the powers of animal nature in a good degree sanctified, and subservient to the devotions of the soul. But where the natural spirits are low and sinking, and where temptations and darkness hang heavy on the mind, the Christian may truly draw near to God, so far as to find a gracious acceptance with him, and may fetch secret divine communications from the mercy-seat to maintain his spiritual life; though he feels but little of these sensations of heavenly pleasure, these more vigorous efforts of devotion, or joy. Yet let him neither deny nor despise those more elevated enjoyments of soul, those near and blessed approaches to the seat of God, with which others have been favoured.

The second *caution* shall be addressed to those, who feel much of rapture and transport in their hours of secret piety. I entreat, 'That they would not imagine themselves so often to enjoy this unspeakable privilege of holy nearness to God in worship, if they do not sensibly find such an increase of holiness, as may prove effectually that they have been with God.' If they have been conversing with their Maker, like Moses in the mount, there will be a shining of holiness upon the face

of their souls. To pretend therefore to have enjoyed much of God in the closet, and to come down amongst men peevish and fretful, or immediately to betray a carnal and covetous, or an haughty and untractable spirit; these are things of so inconsistent a nature, that the succeeding iniquity spoils the devotion, and almost destroys the pretence to any sublime degree of it. Such persons had need look well to themselves, and make a narrow search within, whether their hearts be sincere with God or not, lest they build all their hopes upon the flashy efforts of animal nature, coupled with the thoughts of some sacred objects, and tacked on to a divine meditation. DR. WATTS.

### *Great efficacy of Prayer.*

PRAYER eases the soul in times of distress, when it is oppressed with griefs and fears, by giving them vent, and that in so advantageous a way, emptying them into the bosom of God. The very vent, were it but into the air, gives ease; or speak your grief to a statue rather than smother it; much more ease does it give to pour it forth into the lap of a confidential and sympathising friend, even though unable to help us; yet still more, of one who can help; and, of all friends, our God is, beyond all comparison, the surest, and most affectionate, and most powerful. So Isa. lxiii. 9, both compassion and effectual salvation are expressed: *In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.* And so, resting on his love, power, and gracious promises, the soul quiets itself in God upon this assurance, that it is not in vain to seek him, and that *he despiseth not the sighing of the poor*, Psal. xii. 5.

The soul is more spiritually affected with its own condition, by laying it open before the Lord; becomes more deeply sensible of sin, and ashamed in his sight, in confessing it before him; more dilated and enlarged to receive the mercies sued for, as the *opening wide of the mouth of the soul, that it may be filled*; more disposed to observe the Lord in answering, and to bless him, and trust on him, upon the renewed experiences of his regard to its distresses and desires.

All the graces of the Spirit are, in prayer,



stirred and exercised, and, by exercise, strengthened and increased; faith, in applying the Divine promises, which are the very ground that the soul goes upon to God, hope looking out to their performance, and love particularly expressing itself in that sweet converse, and delighting in it, as love doth in the company of the person beloved, thinking all hours too short in speaking with him. Oh, how the soul is refreshed with freedom of speech with its beloved Lord! And as it delights in that, so it is continually advanced and grows by each meeting and conference, beholding the excellency of God, and relishing the pure and sublime pleasures that are to be found in near communion with him. Looking upon the Father in the face of Christ, and using him as a mediator in prayer, as still it must, it is drawn to further admiration of that bottomless love, which found out that way of agreement, that *new and living way* of our access, when all was shut up, and we must otherwise have been shut out for ever. And then, the affectionate expressions of that reflex love, seeking to find that vent in prayer, do kindle higher, and being as it were fanned and blown up, rise to a greater, and higher, and purer flame, and so tend upwards the more strongly. David, as he doth profess his love to God in prayer, in his Psalms, so no doubt it grew in the expressing; *I will love thee, O Lord my strength*, Psal. xviii. 1. And in Psal. cxvi. 1, he doth raise an incentive of love out of this very consideration of the correspondence of prayer—*I love the Lord because he hath heard*; and he resolves thereafter upon persistence in that course,—*therefore will I call upon him as long as I live*. And as the graces of the Spirit are advanced in prayer by their actings, so, for this farther reason, because prayer sets the soul particularly near unto God in Jesus Christ. It is then in his presence, and being much with God in this way, it is powerfully assimilated to him by converse with him; as we readily contract their habits with whom we have much intercourse, especially if they be such as we singularly love and respect. Thus the soul is moulded further to the likeness of God, is stamped with clearer characters of him, by being much with him, becomes more like God, more holy and spiritual, and, like Moses, brings back a bright shining from the mount.

And not only thus, by a natural influence, doth prayer work this advantage, but even by a federal efficacy, suing for, and upon suit obtaining, supplies of grace as the chief good, and besides, all other needful mercies. It is a real means of receiving. *Whatsoever ye shall ask, that will I do*, says our Saviour, John xiv. 13. God having established this intercourse, has engaged his truth and goodness in it, that if they call on him, they shall be heard and answered. If they prepare the heart to call, he will incline his ear to hear. Our Saviour hath assured us, that we may build upon his goodness, upon the affection of a father in him; *He will give good things to them that ask*, says one Evangelist, (Matt. vii. 11,) *give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*, says another (Luke xi. 13); as being *the good*, indeed the highest of gifts, and the sum of all good things, and that for which his children are most earnest supplicants. Prayer for grace doth, as it were, set the mouth of the soul to the spring, draws from Jesus Christ, and is replenished out of his fulness, thirsting after it, and drawing from it that way.

LEIGHTON.

The efficacy therefore of prayer, to bring light and wisdom into the mind, peace into the conscience, submission into the will, and purity into the affections; to keep our garments clean, our armour bright, and our hearts joyful; to make us strong for the conflict, for service, or for suffering; to obtain sufficiency for our place and work, and a blessing on our endeavours; to secure peace with our enemies, or protection against them; to carry every point that is truly good for us; to bring down blessings on our families, friends, and country; to procure peace and prosperity to the church, the conversion of sinners, and the spread of the Gospel; and for all things which we can desire or conceive;—must be allowed by every man who reverences the Scriptures, or knows what it is *to walk with God*. Did men speculate and dispute less, and pray more, their souls would be *like a watered garden*; fruitful, joyful, beautiful, and fragrant. Prayer is the first breath of divine life: it is the pulse of the believing soul, the best criterion of health or sickness, vigour or debility. By prayer we *draw water with joy from the wells of salvation*: by prayer faith

puts forth its energy, in apprehending the promised blessings, and receiving from the Redeemer's fulness; in leaning on his almighty arm, and making *his name our strong tower*; and in overcoming the world, the flesh, and the devil. All other means of grace are made effectual by prayer: every doctrine and instruction produces its effect, in proportion as this is attended to; every grace revives or languishes according to the same rule. Our grand conflict with Satan and our own hearts is about prayer: the sinner feels less reluctance, and meets with less resistance, in all other means of grace, than in retiring to *pour out his heart* secretly before God; and the believer will find his chief difficulty to consist in continuing instant and fervent in this spiritual exercise. If he succeed here, all else will eventually give place before him, and turn out to his benefit and comfort.

REV. T. SCOTT.

senseless round of vain amusements and diversions, in a continual hurry and dissipation of thought, ignorant of the benefits and comforts of the closet, and therefore ignorant of the true state of their minds, ignorant of their Saviour, ignorant of their duty, ignorant of every thing which they were sent into the world to learn. Thus they live, and—thus they die! If, therefore, we conceive a dread of such a life and such a death (and too great a dread we cannot conceive), let us learn of holy Daniel, to commune with our own heart, and with God, in our chamber. And then let us judge ourselves to have made some progress in the divine life, when the pleasures we find there are preferred, as every experienced Christian knows they ought to be preferred, to all the pleasures the world can offer. BP. HORNE.

#### *Advantages of Family Prayer.*

FAMILY prayer is a most important means of propagating piety to posterity. Children are creatures of imitation. They love to copy all that they see in others. The characters of unborn generations may depend on your conduct in this matter. Eph. vi. 4; Prov. xxii. 6. David says of the Lord, *He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children; that the generations to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments*, Psal. lxxviii. 5—7. Perhaps the present degraded condition of the millions of immortal souls now living in idolatry, with all their guilt and misery, might be traced up to the neglect of family instruction, as one principal cause.

Family worship, when duly conducted, is attended with many happy effects on your whole family. No wonder that those who neglect this are continually troubled with the misconduct and perverseness of those under them and about them; no wonder that jarrings, dissensions, and other disagreeable circumstances, are continually disquieting them. It is just what might be expected. How can they who neglect the worship of God in their fa-

#### *On Private Prayer.*

*Thou when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and shut the door.* And the reason is plain. He who would pray, must first retire. The spirit of the world and the spirit of prayer are contrary the one to the other; and experience will teach any one that he cannot well pray in a crowd. Business, or pleasure, or even common conversation, if it be about the things of this world, and continue for any long time, will strangely indispose the mind for devotion; and the soul, before she can take her flight to heaven, must plume and balance her wings by holy meditation. She must rally her scattered and dissipated thoughts, and fix them on the business she is going about. She must consider the nature of God, to whom she is to pray; of herself who is to pray to him; and of those things for which she is to pray to him. She must know the sins she has been guilty of, to confess them; and the graces she stands in need of, to petition for them. All this is not to be done but by deep meditation; and meditation, which is the mother of devotion, is the daughter of retirement. They who do not meditate, cannot pray; and they who do not retire, can do neither. God help and have mercy on all those who are in this most wretched and deplorable state; as all must be, who pass their days in a

milies, look for peace or comfort in them? I am sure, also, that I may confidently appeal to those who have regular and daily family prayer, that, when conducted in a simple and devout spirit, it has a tendency to remove, or allay, all those unhappy passions to which our common nature is subject, and which, more or less, appear in every family. It unites the members of the family together, gives the head of it a feeling of tenderness and affection for those under him, and makes them esteem and love him. Some masters are, on this account, almost considered as angels in their families. Cecil says of family worship rightly conducted, 'It may be used as an engine of vast power in a family. It diffuses a sympathy through the members. It calls the mind off from the deadening effects of worldly affairs. It arrests every member with a morning and evening sermon, in the midst of all the hurries and cares of life. It says, 'There is a God!' 'There is a spiritual world!' 'There is a life to come!' It fixes the idea of responsibility in the mind. It furnishes a tender and judicious father, or master, with an opportunity of gently glancing at faults, where a direct admonition might be inexpedient. It enables him to relieve the weight with which subordination or service often sits on the minds of inferiors.'

Family prayer gains for us the presence and blessing of our Lord. There is a promise of his presence, which appears peculiarly applicable to this duty, Matt. xviii. 19, 20. Many have found in family worship that help and that communion with God which they have sought for with less effect in private prayer. It was the experience of one Christian, 'I find more of the presence of God, and more of the real spirit of prayer, in praying with my family, than in almost any other means of grace.' Surely, the Christian, who really loves his Saviour, would regularly call his family together to pray with him, from this consideration alone, that he might enjoy more of his Lord's presence.

Dr. Buchanan strikingly contrasts a family which worships God, and a family which worships him not; and the excellence of the remarks will justify the length of the quotation. 'How painful it is to reflect,' he says, 'that there should be, in this kingdom, many domestic societies among whom the worship of the

Deity is not known, in whose houses no grateful accents are ever heard, no exultation of heart for the Divine goodness! There are indeed, accents of exultation and mirth; and the harp, and the viol, and the tabret, and the pipe, are in their feasts; but there is no remembrance of God: they regard not the operation of his hands. While even inanimate nature, in a certain sense, offereth praise to the great Creator, and fulfilleth his will; these men pass through life in silence! Insensible to the mercies, or judgments, or power, or providence of the unseen God; yes, more insensible than the inhabitants of heathen lands, upon whom the light of truth has never shined.

'How different is the scene which is presented in those happy families, where the voice of prayer and thanksgiving consecrates every day! where the word of God is devoutly read, and infants are taught to lisp their Creator's praise! There, from day to day, domestic peace, and love, and harmony, are cherished by the sublimest motives, and strengthened by the tenderest and the most powerful sanctions.—On the hallowed day they repair, with gladness of heart, to their respective places of worship, and mingle with assemblies which meet with much more delight for praise and prayer than other assemblies for worldly mirth.—And let not the world contemn, or disturb their holy exercise: for we learn from Scripture, that it is from such families and assemblies, who are the salt of the earth, worshipping in the midst of us, that the incense of prayer ascends in behalf of the country, and is accepted in heavenly places through the intercession of the Mediator.'

REV. E. BICKERSTETH.

### *The value of Intercessory Prayer.*

THE true treasury of the church is the common stock of prayers with which they all trade to heaven for one another. O what a rich merchant, then, is the saint who hath a stock going on in so many hands! In heaven, Christ is heard at prayer for him; on earth, his brethren. What can this man want? Christ hath interest in his Father's heart, that he can deny him nothing; the saints such interest in Christ, that he will not deny them; so the Christian's trade goes on smoothly in both worlds. It is not only our duty, then,

to pray for others, but also to desire the prayers of others for ourselves. Indeed, that other saints obtain by their prayers for us, what sometimes we do not by our own, is clear from Job xlii. 8. If a Paul turns beggar, and desires the remembrance of others for him, who then needs it not? Nay, Paul at Rome, sends for prayers as far as to the saints at Ephesus; and how large a heart he had for those whose *face he never saw in flesh*, he tells us, Col. ii. 1; O how many are there when time was, could beg prayers of every Christian they met! nothing but wants and complaints could be heard from them, which made them beg help of all they knew to pray their corruptions down and their graces up; but now they have left the beggar's trade, and reign in an imaginary kingdom of their self-conceited sufficiency! But how great is the benefit and the comfort to the Christian, when in any great strait of temptation and affliction, to get some other of the faithful to give a lift with them at the duty of prayer! Thus Daniel, ii. 18, when required to interpret the king's dream, makes the thing known to his three brethren, that they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret. Thus Esther sets the Jews in Shushan to pray for her, iv. 16. So our Apostle, in many of his epistles, desires the saints to carry his name with them to the throne of grace, Rom. xv. 30; 2 Cor. i. 10, 11; Col. iv. 3; Phil. i. 19.

GURNALL.

*Ejaculatory Prayer preventive of those distractions so common between stated duties.*

'A MAN who is praying,' says Bernard, 'should behave himself as if he were entering into the court of heaven, where he sees the Lord on his throne, surrounded with ten thousand of his angels and saints ministering unto him.' When thou comest from a duty in which thy heart has been toying and wandering, thou mayest say, 'Verily God was in this place, and I knew it not.' Suppose all the impertinences and vanities which have passed through thine heart in duty were written out, and interlined with thy petitions, couldest thou have the face to present them to God? Should thy tongue but utter all the thoughts of thy heart in prayer, would not men abhor thee? But thy thoughts are vocal to God, Psal. cxxxix. 2. If thou wert petitioning the king for thy

life, would it not provoke him to see thee playing with thy bandstrings, or catching at every fly that lights upon thy clothes, whilst thou art speaking to him about such serious matters? O think seriously on that Scripture, Psalm lxxxix. 7; *God is greatly to be feared in the assemblies of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are round about him!* Why did God ascend in thunderings and lightnings, and dark clouds upon Sinai? Exod. xix. 16, 18. Why did the mountains smoke under him; the people quake and tremble round about him; yea, Moses himself not exempted; but to teach the people, this great truth in Heb. xii. 28, 29; *Let us have grace whereby we may serve him acceptably, with reverence and godly fear, for our God is a consuming fire!* Present God thus before thee, and thy vain heart will quickly be brought to a more serious frame. But what is the reason our hearts are so dull, careless, and wandering, when we come to hear or pray, but because there have been such long intermissions in our communion with God, by reason whereof the heart is out of a praying frame? If that spiritual warmth, those holy impressions we carry from God in one duty, were but preserved to kindle another duty, it would be of marvellous advantage to keep the heart intent and serious with God. For this purpose those intermediate ejaculations betwixt stated and solemn duties, are of most sweet and excellent use. By these one duty is as it were linked to another, and so the soul wraps up itself in a chain of duties. That Christian seldom misses his mark in solemn duty, who shoots up many of these darts in the intervals of duty. It is an excellent commendation Christ bestows upon the spouse, Cant. iv. 11, *Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb.* On which text one gives this sweet note: 'The honey-comb drops actually but sometimes, but it always hangs full of sweet drops ready to fall.' If our ejaculations were more, our lamentations on this account would be fewer. FLAVEL.

*Habitual Prayer recommended.*

*In every thing by prayer and supplication make your requests known to God.* We should express our gratitude for the blessings, which he confers on us; we should beseech him to enable us to bear with patience and resignation the

trials and sufferings, to which the common lot of humanity will expose us. Prayer will be *a pillar of a cloud* before us *in the day* of prosperity, to cast the shade of humility over the natural presumption of the heart; and *a pillar of fire in the night* of affliction, to enlighten the gloom, which threatens to involve us in despondency. The more we pray, the more delight we shall find in that holy exercise. It is this habit, that will make us *rejoice in the Lord*, and cast a gleam of comfort in the deepest gloom of misery. It is not expected that we should confine ourselves to the forms of prayer, which we have learnt; in repeating these, our thoughts will often wander on worldly objects; a train of ideas will imperceptibly steal our thoughts from heaven. But if we address our God in our own words, suggested by our own feelings, and our own wants; if we open our hearts to him, we shall keep our thoughts fixed upon his awful presence. We are the best judges of our own situation, and of our infirmities: we must have the best conviction of the sins, to which we are subject; of the temptations, to which we are exposed; and the deepest sense of the blessings, which we have received from the hand of God. Every time is fit for this profitable employment; if we have the disposition, we shall find the opportunity to pray. Can we behold the expanse of heaven and earth, without raising our thoughts to the great Creator? Can we observe the growth of our corn, the flourishing state of our cattle, without turning the eye of gratitude to him, from whose bounty we receive these blessings? Can we take a solitary walk or ride, without conversing with our God? Can we perform any work, without considering that we are under his inspection, and without entreating his blessing on our labours? Can we rise in the morning, when we are turning a new leaf in the volume of life, without dedicating the day to his honour and service? Can we lie down at night, and fall into the arms of sleep, the brother of death, without committing ourselves to the protection of our Maker? Can we see our children around us, without entreating their Father and our Father, their God and our God, to make them the staff of our age, and as they advance in years, to make them grow in wisdom and in piety?

These prayers, however, though warm from the heart, and produced by our par-

ticular feelings, will not preclude the use of written forms, even in private. The Common Prayer Book abounds with admirable addresses to God, adapted to almost every circumstance in life. But the greatest fund of pious ejaculations, of earnest petitions, of warm appeals, of humble supplications to Heaven, is to be found in the Psalms. There is not a situation which these divine effusions do not embrace.—Are we in distress, forsaken, and forlorn? 'Unite with the Psalmist in these expressions: *My God, my God, look upon me: why hast thou forsaken me; and art so far from my health, and from the words of my complaint?—Consider and hear me, O my God!—Thou art my succour; haste Thou to help me!—Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice!—O let thine ears consider well the voice of my complaint!—O Lord, let it be thy pleasure to deliver me; make haste, O Lord, to help me!—Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with thine ears consider my calling! Hold not thy peace at my tears!*

Do we wish to express our gratitude for blessings received?—*Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name, give the praise, for thy loving mercy, and for thy truth's sake.—Praise the Lord, O my soul: while I live will I praise the Lord; yea, as long as I have any being, I will sing praises unto my God! Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits; who forgiveth all thy sin, and healeth all thine infirmities, who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving kindness!*

Do we wish to confess our sins to the God of mercy?—*I will acknowledge my sin unto Thee, and my unrighteousness have I not hid.—I said, I will confess my sins unto the Lord, and so Thou forgavest the wickedness of my sin.—I acknowledge my fault, and my sin is ever before me.—Innumerable troubles are come about me; my sins have taken such hold upon me, that I am not able to look up; yea, they are more in number than the hairs of my head, and my heart hath failed me.—My misdeeds prevail against me; O be Thou merciful unto my sins!—Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.*

Do we entreat pardon and mercy?—

*Call to remembrance, O Lord, thy tender mercies, and thy loving kindnesses, which have been ever of old.—O remember not the sins and offences of my youth; but according to thy mercy, think thou upon me, O Lord, for thy goodness!—Look upon my adversity and misery, and forgive me all my sin!—Withdraw not thou thy mercy from me, O Lord, let it be thy pleasure to deliver me; make haste, O Lord, to help me! Have mercy upon me, O God, after thy great goodness; according to the multitude of thy mercies, do away mine offences. Wash me thoroughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.—Turn thy face from my sin, and put out all my misdeeds! If thou, Lord, wilt be extreme to mark what is done amiss, O Lord, who may abide it? But there is mercy with thee; therefore shalt thou be feared.*

Do we wish for spiritual comfort, direction, and assistance?—*Lighten mine eyes, that I sleep not in death.—Make me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me! Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me! O give me the comfort of thy help again, and establish me with thy free Spirit!—Teach me thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in thy truth; O knit my heart unto thee, that I may fear thy name.—Teach me to do the thing, that pleaseth thee, for thou art my God; let thy loving Spirit lead me forth unto the land of righteousness!*

Are we earnestly intent on the salvation of our soul?—*Turn thou, O Lord, and deliver my soul! O save me for thy mercies' sake!—Forsake me not, O Lord, my God!—be not thou far from me. Haste thee to help me, O Lord God of my salvation!—O Lord, let it be thy pleasure to deliver me; make haste, O Lord, to help me!—Show us thy mercy, O Lord, and grant us thy salvation!—Comfort the soul of thy servant; for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul!*

Do we wish to express our trust in God?—*Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff comfort me.—In thee, O Lord, have I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion: deliver me in thy righteousness! Bow down thine ear to me; make haste to deliver me: and be thou my strong rock and house of defence, that thou mayest*

*save me! For thou art my strong rock and my castle; be thou also my guide, and lead me for thy name's sake.—Why art thou so vexed, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? O put thy trust in God; for I will yet thank him, which is the help of my countenance, and my God!—In the multitude of the sorrows that I had in my heart, thy comforts have refreshed my soul!—Thou, Lord, art the thing that I long for; thou art my hope even from my youth.—I will love thee, O Lord, my strength! The Lord is my stony rock and my defence, my Saviour, my God, and my might, in whom I will trust: my buckler, the horn also of my salvation, and my refuge.—Thou hast given me the defence of thy salvation; thy right hand also shall hold me up, and thy loving correction shall make me great!*

Do we wish for life?—*O spare me a little that I may recover my strength, before I go hence, and be no more seen!—O establish me according to thy word, that I may live!—O let my soul live!—but observe the consequent engagement: and it shall praise thee.*

Do we wish to express our sense of the universal presence of God? *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit; or whither shall I go from thy presence? If I climb up into heaven, thou art there; if I go down to hell, thou art there also.—If I take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost part of the sea; even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.—If I say, Peradventure the darkness shall cover me, then shall my night be turned to day.*

REV. DR. VALENTINE.

#### *On answer to Prayer.*

OUR too general neglect of looking for answers to what we ask, shews how little we are in earnest in our petitions. 'None ask in earnest,' says Trail, 'but they will try how they speed. There is no surer and plainer mark of trifling in prayer, than when men are careless what they get by prayer.'—A husbandman is not content without the harvest; a marksman will observe whether the ball hits the target; a physician watches the effect of the medicine which he gives; one who writes or applies to another for any temporal good eagerly expects the answer; and shall the Christian be careless about the effect of his labour?

Every prayer of the Christian, made in faith according to the will of God, for that which God hath promised, offered up in the name of Jesus Christ, and under the influence of his Spirit, whether for temporal or for spiritual blessings, is, or will be, fully answered. God always answers the general design and intention of his people's prayers, in doing that which, all things considered, is most for his own glory, and their spiritual and eternal welfare. As we never find that Jesus Christ rejected a single supplicant who came to him for mercy; so we believe that no prayer made in his name will be in vain. 'The answer of prayer may be approaching, though we discern not its coming. The seed in winter that lies under ground, is taking root in order to a spring and harvest, though it appear not above ground, but seems dead and lost.'

The time, or the mode of granting the request, may vary indeed from our wishes; but yet the prayer made as above stated, is heard, the desire so put up is fulfilled.

Bishop Taylor observes, 'As for those irregular donations of good things which wicked persons ask for, and have, they are either no mercies, but instruments of cursing and crime; or else they are designs of grace, intended to convince them of their unworthiness, and so, if they become not instruments of their conversion, they are aggravations of their ruin.'

In asking for spiritual blessings, for repentance, faith, humility, holiness, love, &c., we are sure of having the particular request granted, for *this is the will of God, even your sanctification*. Yet in these things the way of granting the request may, at first sight, seem like a denial.

Remarkable, sometimes, are the ways in which prayers for spiritual blessings are answered. We pray for an increase of faith, patience, resignation, or other Christian graces: and our trials, instead of being removed, seem greatly aggravated. The clouds grow darker and darker. But the secret supports of the Holy Spirit being afforded, we do not sink under our burden. And in the midst of all these trials, the very things which we asked are given. There is no exercise for faith when all is smooth; no room for patience and resignation when there is no suffering; the very graces which we sought, need difficulties, sorrows, and trials, in order to be manifested, exercised, and granted.

Often the very sentence of death is put upon all our hopes, before they are realised. The extremity of suffering is the point of our deliverance. . . .

The due *use of means* must be attended to, if we wish for answers to our prayers. There is a species of enthusiasm, not uncommon, and to which young or ignorant professors of religion are exposed, that is, to expect the blessing desired in prayer without any effort or exertion on our parts. But in the Bible you may mark how those who prayed used the most likely means to effect their desires. Though Jacob passes the night in prayer, he still in the morning takes the best means to pacify his brother Esau. Bishop Hall says of Moses, when Israel was about to contend with Amalek, 'I do not hear Moses say to his Joshua, Amalek is come up against us; it matters not whether thou go against him, or not; or, if thou go, whether alone or in company; or, if accompanied, whether with many or few, strong or weak; or, if strong men, whether they fight or no; I will pray on the hill: but he says, *choose us out men, and go, fight*. Then only can we hope when we have done our best; and though means cannot effect that which we desire, yet God will have us use the likeliest means on our part to effect it. Prayer, without the use of means, is a mockery of God.'

*The soul of the sluggard desireth and hath nothing*, Prov. xiii. 4. Means being required, both in God's word and by the course of his providence, neglect of them is not faith, but unbelief. The patient who trusts his physician's skill, will carefully follow his directions. Believing prayer does not render exertion unnecessary, but makes it effectual; giving a divine power and blessing to that which was before a merely weak and human effort. And the right way is neither to use unlawful means, nor lawful ones irregularly, nor to trust either in them, or in our prayers; but humbly and diligently to go on in the path of duty, using those means which seem right and profitable, and trusting only in God our Saviour to bring the thing to pass, and that in his own way. His wisdom, power, and love, are infinite. His ways are often dark and mysterious to weak and fallible man; but it will ever be found in the end, *Blessed are all they that put their trust in him!* Psal. ii. 12.

But supposing after having done all,

and waited long, our prayers are still denied, what are we then to conclude?

The denial of prayer is always in mercy to the children of God. It was in kindness to David that his child was taken away. He earnestly prayed for the life of one who would have been a living monument of his shame. He eagerly longed for the preservation of Absalom; but in mercy that rebellious son, who might have ruined him, was cut off. And how frequently is the denial spiritually useful!

Goodwin observes, 'often the very denial breaks the hard heart, and brings a man nearer to God, and puts him on searching into his ways, and estate, and to see what should be amiss in his prayer; which alone is a great mercy, and better than the thing; seeing that by the loss of that one thing, he learns to pray better, and so to obtain a hundred better things afterwards.'

We lose many proofs of God's faithfulness and grace, his tenderness and compassion, by not marking the answers to our prayers in these and in other respects.

Gee thus enumerates the ends for which God may for a season hide himself from the prayers of his people.

'In reference to themselves; to increase their assiduity and ardency in prayer; to fit them for the mercy prayed for; to exercise and try their faith, patience, love, sincerity, of sanctification, and obedience; to manifest himself to them more fully, either in or after the delay; to make the benefit prayed for more precious and welcome, and useful when it comes; to remove the impediments of their receiving, or enjoying the mercy sought for; and to raise up their thoughts, their faith, hope, love, and longings, to the second appearing of Christ. In reference to others; to make up and bring in the number of those for whom the mercy is proposed; to complete the account of the church's sufferers and sufferings; to give others an example of patient and confident waiting upon God; and for the greater dismay and confusion of the adversary.'

When your prayers are not answered, let it lead you to self-examination. Perhaps the prayer may have been answered in a way you have not thought of. Perhaps you were desiring something that would only foster ambition or pride, or were merely considering ease and comfort,

without regard to spiritual edification. Or look for the cause of it in your neglect of Christ's intercession, or your ingratitude for former answers: question your own faith, the fervency of your desires, the purity of your end, the propriety of the manner in which you have offered up your petitions: yes, any thing rather than God's faithfulness: *Let God be true and every man a liar*. Again, God will not be inquired of by those who have an idol in their hearts, Isa. lix. 2; Ezek. xiv. 3. If you are living in any habitual sin, you cannot expect that your prayers should be heard.

When your prayers are answered, let it assure you of God's faithfulness and love; let it encourage you to renew your prayers, to abound therein, to seek God more constantly, to depend more simply on his strength, to lay yourself out more entirely for him, and never to fear undertaking any thing in his cause. Let it excite you to abound in thanksgiving and praise, Ps. lxxvi. 13, 20.

May what has been stated encourage you not only to hope, but patiently to wait for, and attentively observe God's answers to prayer. Keep from such sins as would provoke him to deny your requests, and go on striving and praying, asking, seeking and knocking, till you are at length safely landed on the heavenly shore; you will then find every prayer fully answered, every wish accomplished, and your souls *filled with all the fulness of God*.

REV. E. BICKERSTETH.

*Prayer is not a special gift to privileged persons.*

Who had instructed the poor woman of Canaan in prayer? A stranger, and a daughter of Tyre and Sidon, who was unacquainted with the wonders of the law and the oracles of the Prophets; who had not yet heard from the mouth of the Saviour the words of eternal life; who was still under the shadows of ignorance and of death: she prays, however; her love, her confidence, the desire of being granted, teach her to pray; her heart being touched, constitutes the whole sublimity of her prayer.

And surely, if, in order to pray, it were requisite to rise to those sublime states of prayer to which God exalteth some holy souls; if it were necessary to be wrapped in ecstasy, and transported even up to



heaven, like Paul, there to hear those ineffable secrets which God exposeth not to man, and which it is not permitted, even to man himself to reveal; or, like Moses upon the holy mountain, to be placed upon a cloud of glory, and, face to face, to see God; that is to say, if it were necessary to have attained to that degree of intimate union with the Lord, in which the soul, as if already freed from its body, springs up even into the bosom of its God; contemplates at leisure his infinite perfections; forgets, as I may say, its members which are still upon the earth; is no longer disturbed, nor even diverted by the phantoms of the senses; is fixed, and as if absorbed in the contemplation of the wonders and the grandeur of God; and already participating in his eternity, could count a whole age passed in that blessed state, as only a short and rapid moment; if, I say, it were necessary, in order to pray, to be favoured with these rare and excellent gifts of the Holy Spirit, you might tell us, like those new believers of whom St. Paul makes mention, that you have not yet received them, and that you know not what is even that Spirit which communicates them.

But prayer is not a special gift set apart for privileged souls alone; it is a common duty imposed on every believer; it is not solely a virtue of perfection, and reserved for certain purer and more holy souls; it is, like charity, an indispensable virtue, requisite to the perfect as to the imperfect, within the capacity of the illiterate equally as of the learned, commanded to the simple as to the most enlightened: it is the virtue of all men; it is the science of every believer; it is the perfection of every creature. Whoever has a heart, and is capable of loving the Author of his being,—whoever has a reason capable of knowing the nothingness of the creature, and the greatness of God, must know how to adore, to return him thanks, and to have recourse to him, to call upon him when turned away, to thank him when favourable, to humble himself when he strikes, to lay his wants before him, or to entreat his countenance and protection.

Thus, when the disciples ask of Jesus Christ to teach them to pray, he doth not unfold to them the height, the sublimity, the depth of the mysteries of God: he solely informs them, that, in order to pray, it is necessary to consider God as a tender, bountiful, and careful father; to ad-

dress themselves to him with a respectful familiarity, and with a confidence blended with fear and love; to speak to him the language of our weakness and of our wretchedness; to borrow no expressions but from our heart; to make no attempt of rising to him, but rather to draw him nearer to us: to lay our wants before him, and to implore his aid; to wish that all men bless and worship him; that his reign be established in all hearts; that his will be done, as in heaven, so in earth; that sinners return to the paths of righteousness; that believers attain to the knowledge of the truth; that he forgive us our sins; that he preserve us from temptation; that he assist our weakness; that he deliver us from our miseries. All is simple, but all is grand in this divine prayer; it recalls man to himself, and, in order to adopt it as a model, nothing more is required than to feel our wants, and to wish deliverance from them.

MASSILLON.

#### *The greatest Sinners encouraged to Pray.*

In order to encourage the prayers of sinners, the Lord displays his glory from a throne of grace; here he waits to be gracious, and to dispense pardon and every blessing, to all who ask them with faith in Jesus Christ. Had he been revealed merely as seated on a throne of glory, sustaining the character of a righteous lawgiver and an impartial judge, a kind friend to the obedient, but a terrible avenger to the rebellious; it might well have been said, *Jehovah reigneth, let the people tremble*; but, as he hath made himself known on a mercy seat, as *God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself*, it may be said, *The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice*. The whole plan of the Gospel, as it relates to the person, righteousness, atonement, and mediation of Emmanuel, is evidently intended to give encouragement to the trembling sinner to seek mercy from the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. The general invitations of the Gospel supersede the necessity of inquiring who may come in this new and living way: *Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him come*. The feast of divine love is provided; *all things are ready*; and the messengers of salvation are not only commanded to invite all whom they meet, but even to *compel them to come in*, by every argument, persuasion, expostulation, and encouragement, which

they can devise : for these are the means by which the Holy Spirit produces the willing mind, and gives the praying heart. The very appointment of this way of seeking salvation is a complete encouragement to all who feel desires after the blessings of the Gospel, and are willing to become humble supplicants for them : as it implies that the Lord purposes to bestow them as free gifts on indigent beggars ; and not on those who would buy, earn, or deserve them. For, in this case, prayer is the very language of poverty and distress, which guilt alone has brought on any part of the rational creation of God.

Every general command or exhortation, therefore, to pray, is an encouragement to all who desire to pray ; and whatever guilt they may have contracted, or in whatever depths of temptation and misery they may be plunged, it says to them, *Be of good comfort ; arise, he calleth thee.* Such general exhortations abound in Scripture : they are often addressed to the vilest transgressors, and are commonly connected with absolute promises : *Ask, and it shall be given ; for every one that asketh receiveth.* Such promises do not indeed engage that God will hear the prayers of the formal, the hypocritical, or the impenitent, who may (like the unclean spirit) pray very sincerely, *Torment me not,* and yet hate true religion as much as ever ; for *the prayers of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.* But, when the vilest transgressor is so far humbled and softened as to pray from his heart for mercy and grace, and all the blessings of salvation, as *the gift of God through Jesus Christ ;* he begins to offer *the prayer of the upright, in which the Lord delighteth.*

These assurances are confirmed by the examples of Scripture. When Manasseh, vile as he had been, began to humble himself and pray to the Lord, he was not upbraided with his abominable crimes, but mercifully accepted, pardoned, and delivered. When it could be said of persecuting Saul, *Behold he prayeth !* no further doubt remained of his acceptance and reconciliation. The publican, who loathed himself as much as the pharisee disdained him, and who, not daring to come near, or *to lift up his eyes unto heaven, smote upon his breast, and said, God be merciful to me, a sinner !* went down to his house justified rather than he who deemed it presumption in such a

wretch to pray. Even the short petition of the dying thief, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,* received an immediate answer full of astonishing grace. Nor is there one instance upon record of a prayer being rejected, except for the hypocrisy, wickedness, and unbelief with which it was presented. To all these encouragements we may add the frequent commendations bestowed on importunity, frequency, and fervency in prayer ; and the testimony of all the servants of God to his readiness to hear, and save them from the most tremendous depths into which their sins had cast them, whenever they were brought to cry unto him, and say, *O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul !*

REV. T. SCOTT.

#### *A sense of Sin should incite to Prayer.*

THOUGH we cannot pray with a too deep sense of sin, we may make our sins too exclusively the object of our prayers. While we keep, with a self-abasing eye, our own corruptions in view, let us look with equal intendment on that mercy, which cleanseth from all sin. Let our prayers be all humiliation, but let them not be all complaint. When men indulge no other thought but that they are rebels, the hopelessness of pardon hardens them into disloyalty. Let them look to the mercy of the king, as well as to the rebellion of the subject. If we contemplate his grace as displayed in the Gospel, then, though our humility will increase, our despair will vanish. Gratitude in this, as in human instances, will create affection. *We love him, because he first loved us.*

Let us therefore always keep our unworthiness in view as a reason why we stand in need of the mercy of God in Christ ; but never plead it as a reason why we should not draw nigh to him to implore that mercy. The best men are unworthy for their own sakes ; the worst on repentance will be accepted for his sake and through his merits.

In prayer, then, the perfections of God, and especially his mercies in our redemption, should occupy our thoughts as much as our sins ; our obligation to him as much as our departures from him. We should keep up in our hearts a constant sense of our own weakness, not with a design to discourage the mind and depress the spirits ; but with a view to drive us out of ourselves, in search of the Divine assistance. We

should contemplate our infirmity in order to draw us to look for his strength, and to seek that power from God which we vainly look for in ourselves: we do not tell a sick friend of his danger in order to grieve or terrify him, but to induce him to apply to his physician, and to have recourse to his remedy.

MRS. H. MORE.

*Indisposedness to Prayer should incite to greater diligence in Prayer.*

BUT thou wilt say, I find nothing but heavy indisposedness in it, nothing but roving and vanity of heart; and so, though I have used it some time, it is still unprofitable and uncomfortable to me.—Although it be so, yet, hold on, give it not over. Or need I say this to thee? Though it were referred to thyself, wouldst thou forsake it and leave off? Then, what wouldst thou do next? For if there be no comfort in it, far less is there any for thee in any other way. If temptation should so far prevail with thee as to lead thee to try intermission, either thou wouldst be forced to return to it presently, or certainly wouldst fall into a more grievous condition, and, after horrors and lashings, must at length come back to it again, or perish for ever. Therefore, however it go, continue praying. Strive to believe that love thou canst not see; for where sight is abridged, there it is proper for faith to work. If thou canst do no more, lie before thy Lord, and look to him, and say, Lord, here I am, thou mayest quicken and revive me if thou wilt, and I trust thou wilt; but if I must do it, I will die at thy feet. My life is in thy hand, and thou art goodness and mercy; while I have breath I will cry, or, if I cannot cry, yet I will wait on, and look to thee.

One thing forget not, that the ready way to rise out of this sad, yet safe state, is, to be much in viewing the Mediator, and interposing him betwixt the Father's view and thy soul. Some who do orthodoxly believe this to be right, yet, (as often befalls us in other things of this kind,) do not so consider and use it in their necessity, as becomes them, and therefore fall short of comfort. He hath declared it, *No man cometh to the Father but by me*. How vile soever thou art, put thyself under his robe, and into his hand, and he will lead thee unto the Father, and present thee acceptable and blameless; and the Father shall receive thee, and declare himself well

pleased with thee in his well-beloved Son, who hath covered thee with his righteousness, and brought thee so clothed, and set thee before him.

LEIGHTON.

*None can complain of want of subjects for Prayer.*

AH! my brethren, if we felt the wants of our soul as we feel those of our body,—if our eternal salvation interested us as much as a fortune of dirt, or a weak and perishable health, we would soon be skilful in the divine art of prayer; we would not complain that we had nothing to say in the presence of a God of whom we have so much to ask; the mind would be little diffculted in finding wherewith to entertain him; our evils alone would speak; in spite of ourselves, our heart would burst forth in holy effusions, like that of Samuel's mother before the ark of the Lord; we would no longer be master of our sorrows and tears; and the most certain mark of our want of faith, and that we know ourselves not, is, that of not knowing what to say to the Lord in the space of a short prayer.

And after all, is it possible that, in the miserable condition of this human life, surrounded as we are with so many dangers; made up ourselves of so many weaknesses; on the point, every moment, of being led astray by the objects of vanity, corrupted by the illusions of the senses, and dragged away by the force of example; a continual prey to the tyranny of our inclinations, to the dominion of our flesh, to the inconsistency of our heart, to the inequalities of our reason, to the caprices of our imagination, to the eternal variations of our temper; depressed by loss of favour, elated by prosperity, enervated by abundance, soured by poverty, led away by custom, shaken by accidents, flattered with praise, irritated by contempt; continually wavering between our passions and our duties, between ourselves and the law of God; is it possible, I say, that, in a situation so deplorable, we can be diffculted what to ask of the Lord, or what to say to him, when we appear in his presence? O my God! why then is man not less miserable? Or why is he not better acquainted with his wants?

AH! if you told us that you know not where to begin in prayer; that your wants are so infinite, your miseries and your passions so multiplied, that, were

you to pretend to expose them all to the Lord, you would never have done: if you said to us, that the more you search into your heart, the more your wounds unfold, the more corruption and disorders do you discover in yourself, and that, despairing of being able to relate to the Lord the endless detail of your weaknesses, you present your heart wholly to him, you leave your evils to speak for you; you ground your whole art of prayer on your confusion, your humiliation, and your silence; and that, in consequence of having too much to say to him, you say nothing: if you spoke in this manner, you would speak the language of faith, and that of a penitent king, who, contemplating his repeated relapses, and no longer daring to speak to his God in prayer, said, *Lord, I am troubled, I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long; for mine iniquities are gone over my head; as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My heart panteth, my strength faileth me; for I will declare mine iniquity, I will be sorry for my sin. Forsake me not, O Lord! O my God! be not far from me. Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!* Such is the silence of compunction which forms before God the true prayer.

But to complain that you have no longer any thing to say, when you wish to pray: alas! my dear hearer, when you present yourself before God, do your past crimes hold out nothing for you to dread from his judgments, or to ask from his mercy? What! your whole life has perhaps been only a sink of debaucheries; you have perverted every thing; grace, your talents, your reason, your wealth, your dignities, all creatures; you have passed the best part of your days in the neglect of your God, and in all the delusions of the world and of the passions; you have vilified your heart by iniquitous attachments, defiled your body, disordered your imagination, weakened your lights, and even extinguished every happy disposition which nature had placed in your soul; and the recollection of all this furnishes you with nothing in the presence of God? And it inspires you with no idea of the method you ought to adopt, in having recourse to him, in order to obtain his forgiveness of such accumulated crimes? And you have nothing to say to a God whom you have so long offended? O man! thy salvation, then, must either be without resource, or thou

must have other means of accomplishing it than those of the Divine clemency and mercy.

But, my dear hearer, I go farther. If you lead a Christian life; if, returned from the world and from pleasures, you are at last entered into the ways of salvation, you are still more unjust in complaining that you find nothing to say to the Lord in your prayers. What! the singular grace of having opened your eyes, of undeceiving you with regard to the world, and withdrawing you from the bottom of the abyss; this blessing so rare, and denied to so many sinners, doth it give rise to no grateful feeling in your heart, when at his feet? Can this recollection leave you cold and insensible? Is nothing tender awakened by the presence of your Benefactor, you who pride yourself upon having never forgotten a benefit, and who so pompously display the feeling and the excess of your gratitude toward the creatures?

Besides, if you feel those endless tendencies, which, in spite of your change of life, still rise up within you against the law of God; that difficulty which you still have in doing well; that unfortunate inclination which you still find within you toward evil; those desires of a more perfect virtue, which always turn out vain; those resolutions to which you are always faithless; those opportunities in which you always find yourself the same; those duties which always meet the same repugnance in your heart: in a word, if you feel that inexhaustible fund of weakness and of corruption which remains with you after your conversion, and which alarms so much your virtue, you will not only have ample matter to address the Lord in prayer, but your whole life will be one continual prayer. All the dangers which shall threaten your weakness, all the accidents which shall shake your faith, all the objects which shall open afresh the former wounds of your heart, all the inward emotions which shall prove that the man of sin lives always within you, will lead you to look upwards to him from whom alone you expect deliverance from them. As the Apostle said, every place will be to you a place of prayer; every thing will direct your attention to God, because every thing will furnish you with Christian reflections upon yourself.

MASSILLON.

*Prayer incompatible with a Worldly Spirit.*

PRAYER winds up the soul from the earth, raises it above those things which intemperance feeds on, acquaints it with the transcending sweetness of divine comforts, the love and loveliness of Jesus Christ; and these most powerfully wean the soul from the low creeping pleasures that the world gapes after and swallows with such greediness. . . .

Prayer, being our near communion with the great God, certainly sublimates the soul, and makes it look down upon the base ways of the world with disdain, and despise the truly besotting pleasures of it. Yea, the Lord doth sometimes fill those souls that converse much with him with such beatific delights, such inebriating sweetness, as I may call it, that it is, in a happy manner, drunk with these; and the more there is of this, the more is the soul above base intemperance in the use of the delights of the world. Whereas common drunkenness makes a man less than a man, this makes him more than a man: that sinks him below himself, makes him a beast; this raises him above himself, and makes him an angel.

Would you, as surely you ought, have much faculty for prayer, and be frequent in it, and experience much of the pure sweetness of it? Then, deny yourselves more the muddy pleasures and sweetness of the world. If you would pray much, and with much advantage, then *be sober, and watch unto prayer*. Suffer not your hearts to long so after ease, and wealth, and esteem in the world: these will make your hearts, if they mix with them, become like them, and take their quality; will make them gross and earthly, and unable to mount up; will clog the wings of prayer, and you shall find the loss, when your soul is heavy and drowsy, and falls off from delighting in God and your communion with him. Will such things as those you follow be able to countervail your damage? Can they speak you peace, and uphold you in a day of darkness and distress? Or may it not be such now, as will make them all a burden and vexation to you? But, on the other hand, the more you abate and let go of these, and come empty and hungry to God in prayer, the more room shall you have for his consolations; and therefore, the more plentifully will he pour in

of them, and enrich your soul with them the more, the less you take in of the other.  
LEIGHTON.

We cannot, in retiring into our closets, change our natures as we do our clothes. The disposition we carry thither will be likely to remain with us. We have no right to expect that a new temper will meet us at the door. We can only hope that the spirit we bring thither will be cherished and improved. It is not easy, rather it is not possible, to graft genuine devotion on a life of an opposite tendency; nor can we delight ourselves regularly for a few stated moments, in that God whom we have not been serving during the day. We may, indeed, to quiet our conscience, take up the employment of prayer, but cannot take up the state of mind which will make the employment beneficial to ourselves, or the prayer acceptable to God, if all the previous day we have been careless of ourselves, and unmindful of our Maker. *They* will not pray differently from the rest of the world, who do not live differently.

What a contradiction is it to lament the weakness, the misery, and the corruption of our nature, in our devotions, and then to rush into a life, though not perhaps of vice, yet of indulgence, calculated to increase that weakness, to inflame those corruptions, and to lead to that misery! There is either no meaning in our prayers, or no sense in our conduct. In the one we mock God, in the other we deceive ourselves.

Will not he who keeps up an habitual intercourse with his Maker, who is vigilant in thought; self-denying in action, who strives to keep his heart from wrong desires, his mind from vain imaginations, and his lips from idle words, bring a more prepared spirit, a more collected mind, be more engaged, more penetrated, more present to the occasion; will he not feel more delight in this devout exercise, reap more benefit from it, than he who lives at random, prays from custom, and who, though he dares not intermit the form, is a stranger to its spirit? . . .

Those who are so far conscientious as not to intermit a regular course of devotion, and who yet allow themselves at the same time to go on in a course of amusements which excite a directly opposite spirit, are inconceivably augmenting their own difficulties. They are eagerly heaping up fuel in the day, on the fire which they

intend to extinguish in the evening : they are voluntarily adding to the temptations, against which they mean to request grace to struggle. To acknowledge at the same time, that we find it hard to serve God as we ought, and yet to be systematically indulging habits, which must naturally increase the difficulty, makes our character almost ridiculous, while it renders our duty almost impracticable. . . .

These habitual indulgences seem a contradiction to that obvious law, that one virtue always involves another ; for we cannot labour after any grace, that of prayer for instance, without resisting whatever is opposite to it. If then we lament, that it is so hard to serve God, let us not by our conduct furnish arguments against ourselves ; for, as if the difficulty were not great enough in itself, we are continually heaping up mountains in our way, by indulging in such pursuits and passions, as make a small labour an insurmountable one.

We may often judge better of our state by the result, than by the act of prayer ; our very defects, our coldness, deadness, wanderings, may leave more contrition on the soul than the happiest turn of thought. The feeling of our wants, the confession of our sins, the acknowledgment of our dependence, the renunciation of ourselves, the supplication for mercy, the application to the fountain opened for sin, the cordial entreaty for the aid of the Spirit, the relinquishment of our own will, resolutions of better obedience, petitions that these resolutions may be directed and sanctified, these are the subjects in which the suppliant should be engaged, by which his thoughts should be absorbed. Can they be so absorbed, if many of the intervening hours are passed in pursuits of a totally different complexion—pursuits which raise the passions which we are seeking to allay ? Will the cherished vanities go at our bidding ? Will the required dispositions come at our calling ? Do we find our tempers so obedient, our passions so obsequious in the other concerns of life ? If not, what reason have we to expect their obsequiousness in this grand concern ? We should therefore endeavour to believe as we pray, to think as we pray, to feel as we pray, and to act as we pray. Prayer must not be a solitary independent exercise ; but an exercise interwoven with

many, and inseparably connected with that golden chain of Christian duties, of which, when so connected, it forms one of the most important links.

Let us be careful that our cares, occupations, and amusements may be always such that we may not be afraid to implore the Divine blessing on them : this is the criterion of their safety and of our duty. Let us endeavour that in each, in all, one continually growing sentiment and feeling of loving, serving, and pleasing God, maintain its predominant station in the heart.

MRS. H. MORE.

#### *Prayer must be offered in Faith.*

Ask in faith. The Scriptures insist much on this ; James i. 6 ; Heb. x. 22 ; Matt. xxi. 22 ; Mark xi. 24. *All true prayer comes from faith*, Rom. x. 12, and is the voice and expression of faith. You need, in order to gain the true spirit of devotion, an unwavering belief *that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, Heb. xi. 6 ; that he is able to give us all we ask, and if it be for our real good, will do so. By faith realise his presence. Say with David, *He is about my path, and about my bed*. Fully believe that his almighty power can help and save even in the uttermost extremity, and that he is willing to hear you when you call upon him. It is, in short, a true faith that will make all the difference between a cold, heartless, unprofitable form, like praying (as one expressed it to me) to nothing but empty air, and the real desire of the believer, which, poured out unto God for things according to his will, is sure to succeed ; because Christ hath purchased every blessing, and intercedes for us ; it will make all the difference between a mere ceremony, and the soul-reviving and heart-cheering presence of God. To faith in the presence of God, join an undoubting confidence in the faithfulness of his promises. Vincent says, 'If we did but firmly believe that God, according to his covenant, for his Son's sake, has pardoned sin and will heal our souls of their distempers, an will give grace sufficient, and make us to grow and increase with the increase of God ; verily his promises would appear to be real, and according to our faith it would be to us.' This confidence is perfectly consistent with the deepest humility, and the most entire

distrust of ourselves. The larger our expectations are, the greater sense do we shew of the generosity and bounty of our unseen, but ever-present and ever-gracious Benefactor. 'We should endeavour,' says Watts, 'to impress our minds frequently with a fresh and lively belief of God's existence, though he be so much unknown; of his presence, though he be invisible; and of his just and merciful regard to all the actions of men.' Some have found it a means of strengthening their faith, to appeal, in the midst of their prayers, to the attributes of God, and to plead his promises, and the name of his Son.

'The spirit and life of prayer in faith,' says Traill, 'lies more in expectation than in asking.' Unwise Christians let out the vital spirits of prayer, when they let their expectations languish. When they set their face to pray, they make some conscience of searching out their wants; they labour to improve that sight to the raising of fervent desires of a supply of them: if they yet go higher to take in a sense of the fulness and freeness of that grace where their help is; yet, how rarely are they careful to raise up expectations of that helping grace! Few can say, *As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me*, Psalm lv. 16. Our way is, if we could see the glory, then we would believe; Christ's way is just the contrary: we must first believe, and then we shall see the glory of God, John xi. 40. 'It is the very nature of prayer in faith,' says Walker, 'to cast all manner of care and every burden on the Lord; guilt, corruption, trial, temptation, whatever it be, to come and lay it all upon Christ; and this, with a certain confidence in him, which both does him the highest honour, and makes him best pleased with us. It charges Christ with all, and leaves every thing with him. It says, Lord, here are all these sins that I have done; here are all these temptations I have to struggle with; here are all these corruptions to subdue; here is all this work to be performed; and I am a poor helpless thing: behold, I humbly lay it all upon thee, and leave it all and every part with thee. And I know that thou canst, and thou hast told me thou wilt take care of the whole. It is thy gracious office to do so, and thou delightest to do it. Lord, I cast all my care on thee. There is no other boldness in this than what the promises of God encourage

and give sanction to. Such is the very prayer of faith.

REV. E. BICKERSTETH.

*Prayer only acceptable by Jesus Christ.*

*Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ*, Heb. xiii. 16. The children of God do delight in offering sacrifices to him; but if they might not know that they were well taken at their hands, this would discourage them much; therefore this is added. How often do the godly find it in their sweet experience, that when they come to pray, he welcomes them, and gives them such evidences of his love, as they would not exchange for all worldly pleasures! And when this doth not so presently appear at other times, yet they ought to believe it. He accepts themselves and their ways when offered in sincerity, though never so mean; though they sometimes have no more than a sigh or a groan, it is most properly a spiritual sacrifice.

Stay not away because thou, and the gifts thou offerest, are inferior to the offering of others. No, none are excluded for that; only give what thou hast, and act with affection, for that he regards most. Under the law, they who had not a lamb, were welcome with a pair of pigeons. So that the Christian may say; *What I am, Lord, I offer myself unto thee, to be wholly thine; and had I a thousand times more of outward or inward gifts, all should be thine; had I a greater estate, or wit, or learning, or power, I would endeavour to serve thee with all. What I have, I offer thee, and it is most truly thine; it is but of thy own that I give thee*. No one needs forbear sacrifice for poverty, for what God desires, is the heart, and there is none so poor, but hath a heart to give him.

But meanness is not all; there is a guiltiness on ourselves and on all we offer; our prayers and services are polluted. But this hinders not neither; for our acceptance is not for ourselves, but for the sake of one who hath no guiltiness at all: *acceptable by Jesus Christ*. In him, our persons are clothed with righteousness, and in his clothing, we are, as Isaac said of Jacob in his brother's garments, *as the smell of a field that the Lord hath blessed*, Gen. xxvii. 27. And all our other sacrifices, our prayers, and services, if we offer them by him, and put them into his hand, to offer to the Father, then doubt not, they

will be accepted in him; for this *by Jesus Christ*, is relative both to our offering and our acceptance. We ought not to offer any thing but *by him*, Heb. xiii. 15; and so, we are well-pleasing to the Father. For he is his well-beloved Son, in whom his soul is delighted; not only delighted and pleased with himself, but *in him*, with all things and persons that appear in him, and are presented by him.

And this alone answers all our doubts. For we ourselves, as little as we see that way, yet may see so much in our best services, so many wanderings in prayer, so much deadness, &c., as would make us still doubtful of acceptance; so that we might say with Job, *Although he had answered me, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to me*; were it not for this, that our prayers and all our sacrifices pass through Christ's hand. He is that *angel that hath much sweet odours*, to mingle with *the prayers of the saints*, Rev. viii. 3, 4. He purifies them with his own merits and intercession, and so makes them pleasing unto the Father. How ought our hearts to be knit to him, by whom we are brought into favour with God, and kept in favour with him, in whom we obtain all the good we receive, and in whom all we offer is accepted! In him are all our supplies of grace, and our hopes of glory. LEIGHTON.

*We should seek great things in Prayer.*

God delights to have his people beg great things of him, to implore the performance of *exceeding great and precious promises*; to pray for a share in the *unsearchable riches of Christ*; to know things which pass knowledge, and to be filled with *the fulness of God*; to ask *things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man to conceive*; to ask not as beggars only for alms, but as children for an inheritance; not to ask something, or a few things, but *in every thing to let our requests be made known unto God*: because, with Christ, he giveth us *freely all things*; even *all things richly to enjoy*, 1 Tim. vi. 17. God allows his children a spiritual and heavenly ambition to *covet earnestly the best gifts*; to aspire unto a kingdom; and accordingly to put up great and honourable requests unto him; to think what great things Christ hath purchased, what great things God hath pro-

mised and proposed to us; and to regulate our prayers more by the merits and riches of Christ, and by the greatness of God's mercies, than by those apprehensions which we cannot but have of our own unworthiness. BR. REYNOLDS.

We find instances in the word (and the like the Lord can make again) of great confidence in some at their first coming to the throne of grace: as the blind man, Mark x. 46—52. He only heard of Christ's passing by: he stayed not for Christ's calling him, but *began to cry out, Jesus, thou Son of David, have mercy on me! When many charged him to hold his peace, he cried the more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!* 'Christ was never in my way before, and he shall not pass now without shewing mercy on me, if crying may prevail.' And that his crying was in faith, Christ witnesseth, ver. 52. In all appearance, the woman of Canaan was never at the throne of grace before, Matt. xv. 22—28, at least, never at Christ's feet before: yet she managed her first address with that confidence, that she not only got her desire, but that high commendation with it, *O woman, great is thy faith!* So the centurion, Matt. viii. 5—10. But above all instances, is that of the believing thief on the cross, Luke xxiii. 40—43. Never had the throne of grace so little to encourage an address to it, as when the King of grace was dying on the cross. Never had a sinner less encouragement to come to the throne of grace, than when the Saviour was nailed to one tree, and the sinner to another. Marvellous faith! a dying sinner, dying for his sins, employs a dying Saviour for salvation, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom!* How little did Christ, nailed to, and dying on the cross, look like a King! How strong was the man's faith to believe, that Christ, through death, was going to his kingdom! and that Christ's gracious thought of him would save him! *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* As if our Lord had said, 'This is thy first and thy last address to me, verily it shall be heard.' Believers do not think how pleasing to the Lord, large and high thoughts of the sufficiency, fulness, and freedom of the grace that is in Jesus Christ, are. Believers should *devise liberal things, and by liberal things they shall stand*, Isa.



xxxii. 8. Let a believer ask, and think on the warrant of the promise, as much as he can; the Lord is *able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us. Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen!* Eph. iii. 20, 21.

REV. R. TRAILL.

If you feel disheartened and discouraged in prayer, and hesitate to ask largely at the throne of grace for spiritual blessings; if you have looked rather at your own unworthiness than at the fulness of the Divine benevolence, and have doubted the willingness of God to give to one so fallen and so unholy; be not henceforth deceived by so false a view of your case. It is not your riches, but your poverty that makes you the

fit object of Divine compassion. God does not require of you a moral qualification to ask mercy at his hands; but he looks to your want and helplessness as a sinner, and in the sovereignty of his grace he says, *Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find, &c.* Do not then suffer yourself to be kept back by a desponding contemplation of your unfitness to come to God; but come to him at once, as able and willing to save. Consider the depth of your necessities. Consider the infinite merits of Christ, which are given to you as your plea before God. Consider the gracious, the pressing invitation of your heavenly Father; consider the clear, specific, unfettered language of his promise; and never hesitate to ask, and to ask largely, while he is so willing to give.

REV. E. CRAIG.

## SECTION XI.—ON CHRISTIAN DUTIES.

### On Self-denial.

CHRIST hath said in plain terms, *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself*; implying, that he that doth not deny himself cannot go after him.

But besides that, there is an impossibility in the thing itself, that any one should be a true Christian or go after Christ, and not deny himself, as may be easily perceived, if we will but consider what true Christianity requires of us, and what it is to be a real Christian. A true Christian, we know, is one that lives by faith and not by sight; that *looks not at the things which are seen, but at those things which are not seen*; that believes whatsoever Christ hath said, trusteth on whatsoever he hath promised, and obeyeth whatsoever he hath commanded; that receiveth Christ as his only Priest to make atonement for him, as his only Prophet to instruct, and as his only Lord and Master to rule and govern him. In a word, a Christian is one that gives up himself and all he hath to Christ, who gave himself and all he hath to him; and therefore the very notion of true Christianity implies and supposes the denial of ourselves, without which it is as impossible for a man to be a Christian, as it is for a subject to be rebellious and loyal to his prince at the same time; and therefore it is absolutely necessary that we go out of ourselves before we can go to him.

We must strip ourselves of our very selves before we can put on Christ; for Christ himself hath told us, that *no man can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other.* We cannot serve both *God and Mammon*, Christ and ourselves too; so that we must either deny ourselves to go after Christ, or else deny Christ to go after ourselves, so as to mind our own selfish ends and designs in the world. . . .

And verily it is a hard case if we cannot deny ourselves for him, who so far denied himself for us, as to lay down his own life to redeem ours. He who was equal to God himself, yea, who himself was the true God, so far denied himself as to become man, yea, *a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs*, for us; and cannot we deny ourselves so much as a fancy, a conceit, a sin, or lust, for him? How then can we expect that he should own us for his friends, his servants, or disciples? No, he will never do it. Neither can we in reason expect that he should give himself and all the merits of his death and passion unto us, so long as we think much to give ourselves to him, or to deny ourselves for him. And therefore if we desire to be made partakers of all those glorious things that he hath purchased with his own most precious blood for the sons of men, let us begin here—indulge our flesh no longer,

but deny ourselves whatsoever God hath been pleased to forbid. And for this end, let us endeavour each day more and more to live above ourselves, above the temper of our bodies, and above the allurements of the world: live as those who believe and profess that they are none of their own, but Christ's—his by creation; it was he that made us—his by preservation; it is he that maintains us—and his by redemption; it is he that hath purchased and redeemed us with his own blood. And therefore let us deny ourselves for the future to our very selves, whose we are not, and devote ourselves to him, whose alone we are. By this we shall manifest ourselves to be Christ's disciples indeed, especially if we do not only deny ourselves, but also take up our cross and follow him. . . .

There is still another thing behind wherein we must deny ourselves, if we desire to go after Christ; and that is, we must deny and renounce all our self-righteousness, and all hopes and confidences from ourselves and from what we have done; which I look upon as a very great piece of self-denial; for naturally we are all prone to sacrifice to our own nets, to burn incense to our own drags, to boast of our own good works, and to pride ourselves with the conceit of our own righteousness. Though we be never so sinful, we would not be thought to be so, but would very fain be accounted righteous, not only by men, but by God himself, for something or other which ourselves do; though, when all comes to all, we know not what that should be; but howsoever, the pride of our hearts is such, that we are loth to go out of ourselves to look for righteousness, or to be beholden to another for it.

And this is the reason that justification by faith in Christ hath had so many adversaries in the world; mankind in general being so much in love with themselves, and doting upon what themselves do, that they cannot endure to renounce and vilify their own obedience and good works, so much as to think that they stand in need of any other righteousness besides their own; as if their own righteousness was so perfect, that God himself could find no fault with it, nor make any exceptions against it, but must needs acknowledge them to be just and righteous persons for it. Whereas, alas! there is not the best action that ever a mere mortal did, but if examined by the strict rules of justice, it is far from being good; yea, so far, that

God himself may justly pronounce it evil, and, by consequence, condemn the person that did it for doing of it. And therefore I cannot but wonder what it is that any man doth or can do, for which he can in reason expect to be justified before God; our very righteousness being, as the prophet tells us, but as *filthy rags*, and our most holy performances fraught with sin and imperfection, and therefore so far from justifying us, that we may justly be condemned for them; but this mankind doth not love to hear of, the pride of our hearts being such, that by all means we must have something in ourselves whereof to glory before God himself. But woe be to that person who hath no other righteousness but his own, wherein to appear before the Judge of the whole world! for howsoever specious his actions may seem to men, they will be adjudged sins before the eternal God.

He therefore that would come to Christ, although he must labour after righteousness to the utmost of his power, yet when he hath done all, he must renounce it, and look upon himself as an unprofitable servant; for Christ *came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*; that is, he came not to call such persons as think they have righteousness enough of their own to serve their turns, for such persons think they have no need of him, and therefore it would be in vain to call them; but he calls sinners, that is, such as may perhaps be as righteous as the other; but they do not think themselves to be so, but look upon themselves as undone for ever, unless they have something else to trust to than their own good works and obedience to the moral law. Such persons, therefore, Christ came to call; and if they come to him, they cannot but find rest and righteousness in him. And if any of us desire to go after Christ so as to be his disciples, we must be sure to look upon ourselves as sinners, as deserving nothing but wrath and vengeance for whatsoever we have done. We must renounce all our own righteousness, and be so far from depending upon it, as to think that we have none to depend upon, for so really we have not. And when we have laid aside all thoughts of our own righteousness, as to the matter of our justification before God, then, and not till then, shall we be rightly qualified to embrace another's, even that righteousness which is by faith in Christ. Thus St. Paul, though he had as much, yea, more reason to trust in the flesh or in

himself than others, for himself saith that *touching the righteousness which is of the law*, he was blameless; yet, saith he, *What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him; not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith*, Phil. iii. 7—9. Thus therefore it is that all those must do, who desire to be, as St. Paul was, real disciples of Jesus Christ; as we must forsake our sins, so we must renounce our righteousness too. It is true, this is a great and difficult part of self-denial, thus to deny ourselves all that pride, pleasure, and confidence, which we used to take in the thoughts of our own righteousness and obedience to the law of God; but we must remember, that the first thing which our Saviour enjoins those that come after him, is to deny themselves.

BP. BEVERIDGE.

And yet let us be assured that, however times and seasons may change, the everlasting Gospel is still the same. God is always to be worshipped in spirit; for *God is a spirit; and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth*. All the laws of the Gospel are therefore spiritual, and are consequently unchangeable; for however customs, and manners, and circumstances may alter; however the way in which we are to carry our obedience into effect may be influenced by difference of situation, the fountain in the heart, from which all our actions are to proceed, must be the same; the obedience of the soul of man to his God must be the same. The disposition of the Christian is the same through all eternity: and the same spirit that led the martyrs to the stake is to conduct us through the struggles of sinful nature and the temptations of a guilty world.

Our Saviour foresaw that in prosperity we should be tempted to forget this, and for that very reason he seems to have added the word *daily*, in the passage before us; to remind us that it is not so much by separate acts, and mere outward sufferings, that he expected us to bear our cross, as by the constant disposition of our hearts

and the common tenor of our lives: and for the same reason he takes care to explain the expression, *bearing the cross*, not so much by enduring persecution, or being willing to give up our lives in his service, as by denying ourselves *daily*.

REV. C. WOLFE.

#### On Watchfulness.

THE night is passed, the day is at hand; we have slumbered enough in ignorance; it is now time we know the blessings which God hath bestowed upon us; it is time we should be thankful, and awake out of the sleep of forgetfulness, that we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, and dream no more of our own strength. Our conscience is charged; we cannot plead ignorance; it is time that we rise; the mercy of God, the abundance of his blessing, the fear of his judgment, the regard of our salvation, so requireth.

Let us cast away the works of darkness, they be unfruitful, loathsome, and horrible; they darken the heart, and blind the conscience; he that doth them shall be cast into utter darkness. Let us be afraid, let us be ashamed hereof, such things are not fit for the children of light.

Let us put on the armour of light. God hath chosen us to be his soldiers, and hath called us forth into the field. Our fight is not against flesh and blood, but against the devil, the prince of this world, and the father of darkness: he rampeth like a lion, and lieth in wait, and seeketh whom he may devour. All the vanities of this life, our bodies, our own hearts, conspire against us; the fight is terrible, the danger is great. Let us not be unprovided; let us not stand open to the stroke of the enemy.

Let us take unto us the whole armour of God; let our loins be girded with verity; let us put on the shield of faith, the breastplate of righteousness, the sword of the Spirit, and the helmet of salvation. These be the weapons of righteousness, these be the armour of light. Let us not fear to declare the truth, though thereby we should endanger our life.

Let us be faithful unto the end; let it appear that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to cast down holds, and imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against God; so shall our armour be complete; so shall we shew glorious in the field, and be terrible to the enemy; so shall we stand strong and boldly against sword, and fire,

and death ; so shall we, like faithful soldiers of our captain Christ, manfully stand against the gates of hell, and resist all the assaults, and quench all the fiery darts of the wicked ; then shall we eat of the fruit in the midst of paradise, and shall receive the crown of everlasting glory. **BR. JEWELL.**

*Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation.* To pray not to be led into temptation, and then to rise from our knees and live negligently and without a holy vigilance, is to mock God. We solemnly bind ourselves by prayer to do all in our power to attain the blessings we supplicate. We must pray as if every thing depended, as it does, on God alone, and nothing was to be done by us ; and we must watch, as if all rested upon our diligence, and God without it would neither bring us help nor grant us the victory. God's grace enables his servants *to will and to do of his good pleasure* ; but he works in the use of means, by exciting our own activity and effort, and by quickening us to humility and watchfulness. *He that is born of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.*

Every Christian, then, must be vigilant. He must deal with his heart, as a man would act towards a servant who he was credibly informed was secretly unfaithful. He must watch as a sentinel on his post, who knows that dangers are near, and that if the soldier sleeps, the enemy may safely make his attack. He must therefore *walk circumspectly, keep under his body and bring it into subjection, and avoid even the appearance of evil.* He must be sober and temperate in all things, that his *moderation may appear unto all men.* He must fear even things which seem the most safe. He must take the alarm the first moment he perceives any approbation of sin stealing upon his mind. He must not in the smallest thing *give place to the devil*, but resist him manfully, *steadfast in the faith.*

**REV. D. WILSON.**

Watchfulness and prayer form the Christian's intrenchment. These are the lines our enemy cannot break. Be the person who uses them ever so weak, he will be sure to stand ; be the person who neglects them ever so strong in himself, ever so judiciously taught, or ever so extensive in his knowledge, he is liable to fall.

**MR. WINTER.**

### *On true Mortification.*

LET thy conscience against sin be what it will or can, yet, if it be not joined with a sincere endeavour after a universal obedience unto God in the performance of duties, it is not, neither can it be, true mortification.

This is that in which many deceive themselves. They find a perplexing lust within that troubles their conscience and disturbs their peace. The exceeding guilt of it fills them with bitterness, dread, and horror ; and still it will be thus with them till they have beaten it down and subdued it. They vow, and pray, and watch, and strive against it : they cut off all occasions that should draw it forth ; all provisions that should relieve and support it, and do whatsoever may be done towards the killing of it. Yea, but all this while they are negligent and careless in other duties, which are not of so immediate concernment to that particular lust. They do not strive to follow God in all his ways : if they think one duty will do it, they neglect all the rest. Let not such men think that they do indeed mortify any one corruption.

It is an ill sign, that that heart is very much unmortified where a temptation or corruption can break through all Gospel considerations used against it, and is stopped from breaking into act only by legal arguments. When a temptation to sin assaults thee, thou runnest, it may be, to the love of God, to the death of Christ, to the ugly nature of sin, to the beautiful nature of holiness, to beat it down by these (the best and most effectual) considerations : if these do not prevail, but the lust and temptation still tumultuates, and is ready just to break forth into act, thy heart is all on a flame with it ; and then, possibly, a thought of hell, of vengeance, of everlasting wrath, starts up suddenly and quashes and quenches this temptation, as water cast on a fire. If this be usual with you, your hearts are much unmortified, and your affections strongly engaged unto sin.

Heart sins lie, as so many worms, beating and gnawing the very root of grace ; when as outward sins, any otherwise than as they proceed from the heart, are but as caterpillars, that devour only the verdure and flourishing of grace. How can grace breathe or stir, in such a crowd of sinful thoughts and sinful affections that oppress it ? How can it grow and thrive among

such multitudes of weeds, that choke and starve it? There is no room for grace to live, at least not to act, till mortification pulls up and throws out of the heart all that trash which before filled it.

If I may be allowed so to express it, the very heart of sin lies in the sins of the heart; and if we would indeed mortify it, it is there that we must both aim and strike.

Could we see impenitency, unbelief, hardness of heart, with the same eyes that God sees them, they would appear more ugly and deformed than those foul and notorious wickednesses, which cause an indelible shame and reproach upon the places where such live as are guilty of them. And that, because they deface the choicest part of the image of God; that, wherein the soul doth nearest resemble and transcribe its original. This, a gracious heart, in part, discovers: it sees somewhat of the loathsome nature of these spiritual sins, which before it did not, and therefore now so earnestly opposeth them.

If any, who hath been a sinner, though to a very high degree of scandal, doth eternally perish, it is not because of these outward sins merely, but because of impenitency, of unbelief, of hardness of heart, of slighting and undervaluing Jesus Christ, and refusing the gracious terms of the Gospel. They are only these spiritual sins that do shut men out of heaven, and shut them up in hell, and seal them unto everlasting condemnation. Gross sins do this meritoriously, but these alone do it eventually; these do certainly effect it, as being sins against the only remedy appointed.

Did you ever see, did you ever strive against the pride, the hypocrisy, the unbelief and hardness of your hearts? Do you know what it is to maintain a war against these spiritual sins? Can you abhor and resist a temptation to slight Christ, or to grieve his Spirit, as well as to any outward scandalous sin? If so, this is a good sign that you do indeed rightly exercise mortification. But, if you are only cleansed from the pollutions of the flesh, and not also from the pollutions of the spirit; if, while you war and strive against fleshly lusts, these spiritual and Gospel sins are harboured in your hearts, know, assuredly, that whatsoever seeming victories and conquests you may obtain over them, yet they are not mortified.

BR. HOPKINS.

### *Necessity of Godly fear.*

It were superfluous to insist on the defiling of this passion of fear, and the manifold distinctions of it, either with philosophers or divines. The fear here recommended, 1 Pet. i. 17, is, out of question, a holy suspicion and fear of offending God, which may not only consist with assured hope of salvation, and with faith, and love, and spiritual joy, but is their inseparable companion; as all divine graces are linked together, (as the heathens said of their three graces,) and, as they dwell together, they grow or decrease together. The more a Christian believes, and loves, and rejoices in the love of God, the more unwilling surely he is to displease him, and if in danger of displeasing him, the more afraid of it; and, on the other side, this fear being the true principle of a wary and holy conversation, fleeing sin, and the occasions of sin, and temptations to it, and resisting them when they make an assault, is as a watch or guard that keeps out the enemies and disturbers of the soul, and so preserves its inward peace, keeps the assurance of faith and hope unmolested, and that joy which they cause, and the intercourse and societies of love betwixt the soul and her beloved, uninterrupted; all which are most in danger when this fear abates and falls to slumbering; for then, some notable sin or other is ready to break in and put all into disorder, and for a time makes those graces, and the comfort of them to present feeling, as much to seek as if they were not there at all.

No wonder, then, that the Apostle, having stirred up his Christian brethren, whatsoever be their estate in the world, to seek to be rich in those jewels of faith, and hope, and love, and spiritual joy, and then, considering that they travel amongst a world of thieves and robbers,—no wonder, I say, that he adds this, advises them to give those their jewels in custody, under God, to this trusty and watchful grace of godly fear; and having earnestly exhorted them to holiness, he is very fitly particular in this fear, which makes up so great a part of that holiness, that it is often in Scripture named for it all.

Solomon calls it the *beginning* or the *top of wisdom*, Prov. xv. 33: the word signifies both, and it is both. The beginning of it, is the beginning of wisdom, and the progress and increase of it, is the in-

crease of wisdom. That hardy rashness which many account valour, is the companion of ignorance; and of all rashness, boldness to sin is the most witless and foolish. There is in this, as in all fear, an apprehension of an evil whereof we are in danger. The evil is sin, and the displeasure of God and punishment following upon sin. The godly man judgeth wisely, as the truth is, that sin is the greatest of evils, and the cause of all other evils; it is a transgression of the just law of God, and so a provocation of his just anger, and the cause of those punishments, temporal, spiritual, and eternal, which he inflicts. And then, considering how mighty he is to punish, considering both the power and the reach of his hand, that it is both most heavy and unavoidable; all these things may and should concur to the working of this fear.

There is, no doubt, a great difference betwixt those two kinds of fear that are usually differenced by the names of *servile* and *filial* fear; but certainly, the most genuine fear of the sons of God, who call him Father, doth not exclude the consideration of his justice and of the punishment of sin which his justice inflicts. We see here, it is used as the great motive of this fear, that he *judgeth every man according to his works*. And David in that Psalm wherein he so much breathes forth those other sweet affections of love, and hope, and delight in God and in his word, yet expresseth this fear even of the justice of God: *My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments*, *Psa. cxix. 120*. The flesh is to be awed by Divine judgments, though the higher and surer part of the soul is strongly and freely tied with the cords of love. Temporal corrections, indeed, they fear not so much in themselves, as that impression of wrath that may be upon them for their sins, *Psa. vi. 1*. That is the main matter of their fear, because their happiness is in his love, and the light of his countenance, that is their life. They regard not how the world looks upon them; they care not who frown, so he smile on them; because no other enemy nor evil in the world can deprive them of this, but their own sin, therefore that is what they fear most.

As the evil is great, so the Christian hath great reason to fear in regard of his danger of it, considering the multitude, strength, and craft of his enemies, and his own

weakness and unskilfulness to resist them, And his sad experience in being often foiled, teacheth him that it is thus; he cannot be ignorant of it; he finds how often his own resolutions and purposes deceive him, Certainly, a godly man is sometimes driven to wonder at his own frailty and inconstancy. What strange differences will be betwixt him and himself; how high and how delightful at some times are his thoughts of God and the glory of the life to come; and yet, how easily at another time base temptations will bemire him, or, at the least molest and vex him! And this keeps him in a continual fear, and that fear in continual vigilancy and circumspectness. When he looks up to God, and considers the truth of his promises, and the sufficiency of his grace and protection, and the almighty strength of his Redeemer, these things fill his soul with confidence and assurance; but when he turns his eye downward again upon himself, and finds so much remaining corruption within, and so many temptations, and dangers, and adversaries without, this forces him not only to fear, but to despair of himself; and it should do so, that his trust in God may be the purer and more entire. That confidence in God will not make him secure and presumptuous in himself, nor that fear of himself make him diffident of God. This fear is not opposite to faith, but high-mindedness and presumption are. See *Rom. xi. 20*. To a natural man, it would seem an odd kind of reasoning that of the Apostle, *Phil. ii. 12, 13, It is God that worketh in you to will and to do of his good pleasure*: therefore, (would he think) you may save labour, you may sit still, and not work, or, if you work, you may work fearlessly, being so sure of his help: but the Apostle is of another mind; his inference is, Therefore, *work out your own salvation, and work it with fear and trembling*.

But he that hath assurance of salvation, why should he fear? If there is truth in his assurance, nothing can disappoint him, not sin itself. It is true; but it is no less true, that if he do not fear to sin, there is no truth in his assurance: it is not the assurance of faith, but the mispersuasion of a secure and profane mind. Suppose it so, that the sins of a godly man cannot be such as to cut him short of that salvation whereof he is assured; yet they may be such as for a time will deprive him of that

assurance, and not only remove the comfort he hath in that, but let in horrors and anguish of conscience in its stead. Though a believer is freed from hell, (and we may overstrain this assurance, in our doctrine, beyond what the soberest and devoutest men in the world can ever find in themselves, though they will not trouble themselves to contest and dispute with them that say they have it,) so that his soul cannot come there: yet some sins may bring as it were a hell into his soul for a time, and this is reason enough for any Christian in his right wits to be afraid of sin. No man would willingly hazard himself upon a fall that may break his leg, or some other bone; though he could be made sure that he should not break his neck, or that his life were not at all in danger, and that he should be perfectly cured, yet the pain and trouble of such a hurt would terrify him, and make him wary and fearful when he walks in danger. The broken bones that David complains of after his fall, may work fear and wariness in those that hear him, though they were ascertained of a like recovery.

This fear is not cowardice; it doth not debase, but elevates the mind; for it drowns all lower fears, and begets true fortitude and courage to encounter all dangers, for the sake of a good conscience and the obeying of God. *The righteous is bold as a lion*, Prov. xxviii. 1. He dares do any thing but offend God; and to dare to do that, is the greatest folly, and weakness, and baseness in the world. From this fear have sprung all the generous resolutions, and patient sufferings of the saints and martyrs of God: because they durst not sin against him, therefore they durst be imprisoned, and impoverished, and tortured, and die for him. Thus the prophet sets carnal and godly fear as opposite, and the one expelling the other, Isa. viii. 12, 13. And our Saviour, Luke xii. 4, 5. *Fear not them that kill the body: but fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, fear him.* Fear not, but fear; and therefore fear, that you may not fear. This fear is like the trembling that hath been observed in some of great courage before battles. Moses was bold and fearless in dealing with a proud and wicked king; but when God appeared, he said, (as the Apostle informs us,) *I exceedingly fear and quake*, Heb. xii. 21.

LEIGHTON.

### *On Christian Submission and Contentment.*

BUT patience, contentment, and acquiescence in the will of God respecting us, constitute so important a part of the Christian temper, that they require a more particular consideration; and when genuine, they are so invariably connected with submission to God in all other respects, that, wherever any appearances of them are found wholly separated from it, we may be sure they are mere counterfeits, the result of natural insensibility, affected apathy, thoughtless indolence, or presumptuous obduracy. Evangelical principles, by inculcating the doctrine of our entire unworthiness, effectually induce the conviction that we all enjoy more than we deserve, and suffer less than is due to our sins; so that, as far as we are influenced by them, they must silence our rebellious murmurs and repinings against God. They lead us likewise so entirely to trace every event to his appointment, as the first cause of all our trials, that thus they tend directly to counteract our propensity to *despise* his chastenings, or to vent our uneasiness under trouble by expressions of anger against instruments and second causes. They likewise give us such ground for confidence in the mercy, truth, power, and love of God, and for the animating hope of future happiness, as suffices to support the soul, and to preserve us from *fainting* or desponding under divine rebukes; whilst the persuasion that infinite wisdom and everlasting love have chosen, and will over-rule, every event for our more important good, is suited to produce a rational, reflecting, and abiding acquiescence in the will of our heavenly Father. The Lord has many wise and kind reasons for allotting to his people such things as they would never have chosen for themselves; and, if they knew the whole intent of his most painful dispensations, they would certainly approve of them; for every affliction is medicinal, and conducive to sanctification. Thus the Christian's principles lead him to consider his station, abode, employment, provision, trials, losses, disappointments, and vexations, as *the will of God concerning him*; and this induces him to acquiesce in them. He learns, in the school of Christ, *in whatever state he is, therewith to be content*; and, as far as he acts consistently with his judgment, he views every dispensation in a favourable

light, and realises the paradox, *sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*. He seeks comfort from God, when other comforts are withdrawn; and he is taught to wait his time for deliverance, by *patient continuance in well-doing*; without using any sinful expedients, or deserting his path or his work to escape the cross. He looks for trouble as long as he continues on earth: he esteems sin to be a greater evil than affliction; and, in the character, sufferings, patience and glory of his divine Saviour, he finds every instruction explained, and every argument enforced, by which resignation, confidence in God, and joy in tribulations are inculcated. Indeed in this, as in all other respects, the believer is conscious that he comes far short of his perfect rule and example: and this covers him with shame, and excites his earnest prayers for mercy and grace; but his views tend to render him cheerful at all times, and in all circumstances, as they give the fullest assurance that every event will conduce to the final and eternal good of all who love God. So that all the discouragement, despondency, and disquietude of religious persons spring from other causes, and are directly contrary to their principles. A humble confidence in God, in respect of the future, is also of great importance: but it may be particularly considered as one of the believer's privileges, and need not further be discussed in this place; for, indeed, our duties and our privileges are seldom more distinct, than the same object viewed in different lights, or the same idea expressed by different terms.

REV. T. SCOTT.

Whatever I can desire or conceive as essential to my peace, cannot be the production of this world, and in this world I seek not for it. If all the good of the present life were within my reach, and I had both liberty and capacity for its enjoyment, I know that it is not only changeable and evanescent, but is bounded by the grave. Thy full consolation and perfect delight, therefore, O my soul, are to be found only in God, the comfort of the poor, and the exaltation of the humble. Wait a little while, wait with patience and resignation, for the accomplishment of the divine promise, which cannot fail, and thou shalt enjoy the plenitude of good in heaven. By the pursuit of earthly and finite good, thou lovest, that which is cele-

tial and infinite: use this world, therefore, as *a pilgrim and a stranger*, and make only the next the object of desire.

It is impossible thou shouldest be satisfied with temporal good, because thou wert not formed for the enjoyment of it; and though all that the creatures comprehend were in thy possession, thou wouldest still be unblest; for it is in the Creator, the supreme God alone, that all blessedness consists: not such as is extolled and sought after by the foolish lovers of the world; but such as the faithful Christian admires and sighs for; such as the spiritual and pure in heart, whose *conversation is in heaven*, have sometimes a foretaste of.

How vain and transient is all human comfort! how substantial and permanent that which is derived from the Spirit of Truth living and ruling in the soul! The regenerate man continually turneth to Jesus, the comforter within him, and saith, 'Be present with me, Lord Jesus, in all places, and at all times! May I find consolation, in being willing to bear the want of all human comfort! and if thy consolation also be withdrawn, let thy will and righteous probation of me be to me as the highest comfort; for thou *wilt not always chide, neither wilt thou keep thine anger for ever!*' . . .

Bring my will, O Lord, into true and unalterable subjection to thine, and do with me what thou pleasest; for whatever is done by thee cannot but be good. If thou pourest thy light upon me, and turnest my night into day, blessed be thy name; and if thou leavest me in darkness, blessed also be thy name! If thou exaltest me with the consolations of thy Spirit, or humblest me under the afflictions of fallen nature, still may thy holy name be for ever blessed!

THOMAS A KEMPIS.

Christians are too little aware what their religion requires from them, with regard to their wishes. When we wish things to be otherwise than they are, we lose sight of the great practical parts of the life of godliness. We wish, and wish;—when, if we have done all that lies on us, we should fall quietly into the hands of God. Such wishing cuts the very sinews of our privileges and consolations. You are leaving me for a time; and you say you wish you could leave me better, or leave me with some assistance: but, if it is



right for you to go, it is right for me to meet what lies on me, without a wish that I had less to meet, or were better able to meet it.

I could write down twenty cases wherein I wished God had done otherwise than he did; but which I now see, had I had my own will, would have led to extensive mischief. The life of a Christian is a life of paradoxes. He must lay hold on God: he must follow hard after him: he must determine not to let him go. And yet he must learn to let God alone. Quietness before God is one of the most difficult of all Christian graces;—to sit where he places it; to be what he would have us to be, and this as long as he pleases.

REV. R. CECIL.

### *On Implicitness.*

God has marked Implicitness and Simplicity of faith with peculiar approbation. He has done this throughout the Scripture; and he is doing it daily in the Christian life. An unsuspecting, unquestioning, unhesitating spirit he delights to honour. He does not delight in a credulous, weak, and unstable mind. He gives us full evidence, when he calls and leads; but he expects to find in us, what he himself bestows,—an open ear, and a disposed heart. Though he gives us not the evidence of sense; yet he gives such evidence as will be heard by an open ear, and followed by a disposed heart:—*Thomas! because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.* We are witnesses what an open ear and a disposed heart will do in men of the world. If wealth is in pursuit—if a place presents itself before them—if their persons, and families, and affairs, are the object—a whisper, a hint, a probability, a mere chance, is a sufficient ground of action. It is this very state of mind with regard to religion, which God delights in, and honours. He seems to put forth his hand, and to say,—‘Put thy hand into mine; follow all my leadings; keep thyself attentive to every turn.’

REV. R. CECIL.

### *Patience commended by God's example.*

LONG-SUFFERING is God's darling attribute; and what is dear in his sight, ought not to be less precious in ours. And how marvellous is his patience, who daily pours his blessings on those men, who as daily

offend, affront, and dishonour him; making his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, sending rain on the unjust as well as the just, and not excluding the worst of us from those blessings, to the least of which the best of us have no title! For the benefit of the guilty as well as the innocent, of the impious as well as the pious, of the ungrateful as well as the grateful, the seasons take their rounds, the elements work together, the light and air exert their kindly influences, the fountains send forth their salutary streams, the corn fields grow yellow, the grapes ripen on the vines, the boughs of the fruit-trees bend down, the groves are clothed, and the pastures flourish. The Gospel is still preached to those who slight it; salvation is still held forth to those who have so often dashed it from them; Christ is still offered to those who have blasphemed him. And although God be provoked every day, yet he holds his hand, and waits patiently, till the last minute of man's trial and the world's duration be past. Although he have the power in his own hands, and the weapons of his indignation are all ready, he defers to strike, if perhaps men may at length be led by his long-suffering to repentance; because he wills not the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted, and live; and while judgment sleeps, mercy calls night and day to sinners, *Why will ye die? Repent, and ye shall be forgiven; turn ye, and ye shall live.* Yet God's blessings are abused to the purposes of luxury and lasciviousness: his truth is denied; his commandments are broken; his church is persecuted; his ministers are insulted; his Son is crucified afresh; and his own long-suffering is made an argument against his existence—And he is still patient. What is man, then, that he should complain?

The patience which we so much admire in God, shone forth yet more amazingly in the person of his Son Jesus Christ. For was ever patience like that patience, which, descending from a throne of glory, bore a long imprisonment in the womb, to sanctify sinners; and lay in a stable, to bring them to a kingdom? Behold the Master baptised by the servant, and he who alone could give remission of sins, submitting to be washed in the laver of regeneration. He fasts forty days, who filleth all things living with plenteousness, and who is himself the bread of life. He endures the

temptation of Satan, and answers them one by one from the Scriptures, who could have remanded him to his chains in a moment by the word of his power. With his disciples he lived, not as their Lord, but the servant of all. How tenderly did he bear with all their ignorances and infirmities, leading them on gently, as they were able to follow him! And that they might never refuse to do offices of kindness for each other, he washed all their feet, and, amongst them, those of Judas, from whom he meekly received the kiss that betrayed him. How patiently did he endure the contradiction of sinners; and, in his disputes with the Jews, how lovingly did he try to persuade the incredulous, and to melt by kindness the hearts that were hardened! How quietly did he submit to the insolence of the proud, and give place to the fury of the wrathful, desirous, even to his last hour, to save, if possible, those murderers of the prophets, those rebels against their God! But when the time of his passion came, what railing and revilings were patiently heard by him, what mockery and insult he patiently suffered! How was he wounded, who heals every disease? How was he crowned with thorns, who crowns his martyrs with unfading garlands? How was he stripped naked, who clothes the field with flowers, and all the world with robes, and the whole globe with the canopy of heaven, and the dead with immortality? How was he fed with gall and vinegar, who reaches out to his people the fruits of paradise, and the cup of salvation? Innocent and righteous, nay, innocence and righteousness itself, he was numbered with the transgressors. The truth was oppressed by false witnesses; he was judged who was to judge the world; the Word of God became dumb as a lamb before his shearers. And when, at the crucifixion, the heavens were confounded, and the earth trembled, and the sun, that he might not be forced to behold the villany of the Jews, withdrew his shining, and left the world in darkness; still the blessed Jesus said nothing, and betrayed no emotion of anger, but endured without murmuring all that earth and hell could lay upon him, till he had put the last stroke to this most finished picture of perfect patience, and prayed for his murderers; whom he has been ever since, and is now, ready to receive, upon their repentance, not only to pardon, but

to a participation of the glories of his kingdom.  
BP. HORNE.

#### *On Christian Benevolence.*

THAT all true saints are of a loving, benevolent, and beneficent temper, the Scripture is very plain and abundant. Without it, the Apostle tells us, though *we should speak with the tongues of men and angels, we are as a sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*; and that though we have *the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge*, yet without this spirit *we are nothing*. And there is no one virtue or disposition of the mind that is so often, and so expressly insisted on, in the marks that are laid down in the New Testament, whereby to know true Christians. It is often given as a sign that is peculiarly distinguishing, by which all may know Christ's disciples, and by which they may know themselves; and is often laid down, both as a negative and positive evidence. Christ calls the law of love, by way of eminency, his *commandment*, John xiii. 34: *A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*. And chap. xv. 12: *This is my commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you*. And ver. 17: *These things I command you, that ye love one another*. And says, chap. xiii. 35: *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another*. And chap. xiv. 21, (still with a special reference to this which he calls his *commandment*): *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*. The beloved disciple, who had so much of this sweet temper himself, abundantly insists on it, in his epistles. There is none of the Apostles is so much in laying down express signs of grace, for professors to try themselves by, as he; and in his signs, he insists scarcely on any thing else, but a spirit of Christian love, and an agreeable practice: 1 John ii. 9, 10; *He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother, abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him*. Chap. iii. 14: *We know that we are passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren: he that loveth not his brother, abideth in death*. Ver. 18, 19: *My little children, let us not love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know*

that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. Ver. 23, 24: *This is his commandment, that we should love one another. And he that keepeth his commandments, dwelleth in him, and he in him: and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* Chap. iv. 7, 8: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not, knoweth not God: for God is love.* Ver. 12, 13: *No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, because he hath given us of his Spirit.* Ver. 16: *God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him.* Ver. 20: *If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*

And the Scripture is as plain as it is possible it should be, that none are true saints, but those whose true character it is, that they are of a disposition to pity and relieve their fellow-creatures, that are poor, indigent, and afflicted;—Ps. xxxvii. 21: *The righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.* Ver. 26: *He is ever merciful and lendeth.* Ps. cxii. 5: *A good man sheweth favour and lendeth.* Ver. 9: *He hath dispersed abroad, and given to the poor.* Prov. xiv. 31: *He that honoureth God, hath mercy on the poor.* Prov. xxi. 26: *The righteous giveth and spareth not.* Jer. xxii. 16: *He judgeth the cause of the poor and needy, then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord.* James i. 27: *Pure religion and undefiled, before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, &c.* Hos. vi. 6: *For I have desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt-offerings.* Matt. v. 7: *Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.* 2 Cor. viii. 8: *I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love.* James ii. 13. 16: *For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy. What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food; and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace,*

*be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body, what doth it profit?* 1 John iii. 17: *Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?* Christ, in that description he gives of the day of judgment, Matt. xxv. (which is the most particular that we have in all the Bible,) represents that judgment will be passed that day, according as men have been found to have been of a merciful spirit and practice, or otherwise. Christ's design in giving such a description of the process of that day, is plainly to possess all his followers with that apprehension, that unless this was their spirit and practice, there was no hope of their being accepted and owned by him at that day. Therefore this is an apprehension that we ought to be possessed with. We find in Scripture, that a righteous man and a merciful man are synonymous expressions. Isa. lviii. 1: *The righteous perisheth, and no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, none considering that the righteous is taken away from the evil to come.*

Thus we see how full, clear, and abundant the evidence from Scripture is, that those who are truly gracious, are under the government of that lamb-like, dove-like Spirit of Jesus Christ, and that this is essentially and eminently the nature of the saving grace of the Gospel, and the proper spirit of true Christianity. We may therefore undoubtedly determine, that all truly Christian affections are attended with such a spirit, and that this is the natural tendency of the fear and hope, the sorrow and the joy, the confidence and the zeal of true Christians.

PRES. EDWARDS.

*Our great need of Sober-mindedness.*

CHRYSOSTOM says, 'Sober-mindedness is the same with lowly-mindedness.' And Theodoret makes it the same with that poverty of spirit, on which Christ pronounces his first blessing. It is recommended to the younger to be *clothed with humility*, that is, to be sober-minded.

It is an observation that I have made upon the little acquaintance I have had with the world, that I have seen more young people ruined by pride, than perhaps by any one lust whatsoever; and

therefore let me press this upon you with all earnestness; and it is a caution introduced with more than ordinary solemnity, *I say, through the grace given unto me, unto every man that is among you*; and what is the word that is thus declared to be of divine original, and universal concern? It is this—that *no man think of himself above what he ought to think, but think soberly*.

Keep up low thoughts of yourselves, of your endowments both outward and inward, of your attainments, and improvements, and all your performances, and all the things you call merits and excellencies. Boast not of a false gift, of what you have not; nor be puffed up with what you have. What there is in you that is commendable, wink at it yourselves, as most people do at their own faults, and diminish it; and look much at that in others which is more commendable. . . .

Keep up a quick and constant sense of your own manifold defects and infirmities—how much there is in you, and how much is said and done by you every day, which you have reason to be ashamed of, and humbled for—in how many things you come short of others, and in how many more you come short of the rule of duty: you will find no reason to be proud of what you know, when you see how much you are ignorant of, nor of what you do that is good, when you see how much you do amiss. Dwell much upon humbling considerations, and those that tend to take down your high opinion of yourselves; and keep up a humble sense of your necessary and constant dependence upon Christ and his grace, without which you are nothing, and will soon be worse than nothing. . . .

You are setting out in a world of sorrows and snares, of troubles and temptations, and therefore are concerned to be sober-minded, that you may be armed accordingly, so that the troubles of the world may not rob you of your peace, nor the temptations of it rob you of your purity.—Your way lies through a wilderness, a land of darkness and drought, and nothing but sober-mindedness will carry you safe through it to Canaan.

Now you are young and have the world before you, you are apt to flatter yourselves with a conceit that every thing will be safe and pleasant; your mountain you think stands so strong, that it cannot be moved;

that nothing can shake either your integrity, or your prosperity; but you little know what this world is, and what snares there are in every condition of life and every company, in all employments, in all enjoyments. And if you be careless, and vain, and live at large, you make yourselves an easy prey to the tempter, and are in danger of being carried away by the course of this world. You have need therefore to take heed to yourselves, and to keep your souls diligently, that is, to be sober-minded; for, considering the corruption that is in the world through lust, and the corruption that is in your own hearts, what may we not fear when they come together? . . .

You know not what trials and troubles you may be reserved for, but you know that *man who is born of a woman, is but of few days, and full of trouble*; his crosses, certain, more or less; a cross to be taken up daily; his comforts uncertain: and should not this make you sober, that when afflictions come, they may not be so terrible as they are to those who, by indulging themselves in mirth and pleasure, have made themselves like *the tender and delicate woman, that would not set so much as the sole of her foot to the ground, for tenderness and delicacy*? Even the common calamities of human life press hard upon such, and wound deep; whereas those who live a sober, serious, self-denying life, are, like Christ, acquainted with grief, have made it familiar to them, and can the easier reconcile themselves to it. . . .

You are here in this world upon your trial for heaven. O that you would firmly believe this—not only that you are hastening apace into eternity, but, that it will certainly be to you a comfortable or a miserable eternity, according to what you are and do while you are in the body! This consideration, one would think, should make you sober. . . .

Eternal life is set before you, eternal happiness in the vision and fruition of God; you may make it sure, if it be not your own fault, may lay hold on it. There are substantial honours, satisfying pleasures, and true riches, in comparison with which all the riches, honours, and pleasures of this world are empty names, and shadows. These may be your portion for ever; they shall be so, if by a patient continuance in well-doing through Christ you

seek for this glory, honour, and immortality. You are here probationers for the best preferment, for a place in the New Jerusalem; you stand candidates for a crown, a kingdom incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away; you stand fair for it: and is it not time to think then? to think seriously? and soberly to apply yourselves to that business for which you were sent into this world, and from which, if it be done faithfully, you may remove with comfort to another world? You ought to be serious and circumspect now, because as you spend your time, so you are likely to spend your eternity. A great deal of work you have to do, and but little time to do it in. . . .

But above all, you must shortly go to judgment. With the consideration of this, Solomon endeavours to make his young man sober, who is for walking in the way of his heart and in the sight of his eyes,—*Know thou that for all these things God shall bring thee into judgment.* And thou who makest a jest of every thing, shalt not be able to turn that off with a jest hereafter, however thou mayest think to do it now. This likewise he urges upon his pupil, as a reason why he should be religious; *By these, my son, be admonished, to fear God and keep his commandments, for God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing.*

MATT. HENRY.

#### *Importance of Heavenly-mindedness.*

A HEAVENLY mind is the nearest and truest way to a life of comfort. The countries far north are cold and frozen, because they are distant from the sun. What makes such frozen uncomfortable Christians, but their living so far from heaven? And what makes others so warm in comforts, but their living higher, and having nearer access to God? When the sun in the spring draws near our part of the earth, how do all things congratulate its approach! The earth looks green, the trees shoot forth, the plants revive, the birds sing, and all things smile upon us. If we would but try this life with God, and keep these hearts above, what a spring of joy would be within us? How should we forget our winter sorrows? How early should we rise to sing the praise of our great Creator? O Christian, get above. Those that have been there, have found it warmer; and I doubt not but

thou hast sometime tried it thyself. When have you largest comforts? Is it not, when thou hast conversed with God, and talked with the inhabitants of the higher world, and viewed their mansions, and filled thy soul with the fore-thoughts of glory? If thou knowest by experience what this practice is, I dare say thou knowest what spiritual joy is. If, as David professes, *the light of God's countenance more gladdens the heart than corn, and wine*; then surely they that draw nearest, and most behold it, must be fullest of these joys. Whom should we blame then, that we are so void of consolation, but our own negligent hearts? God hath provided us a crown of glory, and promised to set it shortly on our heads, and we will not so much as think of it; he bids us behold and rejoice, and we will not so much as look at it; and yet we complain for want of comfort. It is by believing that we are *filled with joy and peace*, and no longer than we continue our believing. It is *in hope* the saints rejoice, and no longer than they continue hoping. God's Spirit worketh our comforts, by setting our own spirits on work upon the promises, and raising our thoughts to the place of our comforts. As you would delight a covetous man by shewing him gold; so God delights his people by leading them, as it were, into heaven, and shewing them himself, and their rest with him. He does not cast in our joys while we are idle, or taken up with other things. He gives the fruits of the earth while we plough, and sow, and weed, and water, and dung, and dress, and with patience expect his blessing; so doth he give the joys of the soul. I intreat thee, reader, in the name of the Lord, and as thou valuest the life of constant joy, and that good conscience which is a continual feast, to set upon this work seriously, and learn the art of heavenly-mindedness, and thou shalt find the increase an hundred-fold, and the benefit abundantly exceed thy labour. But this is the misery of man's nature; though every man naturally hates sorrow, and loves the most merry and joyful life, yet few love the way to joy, or will endure the pains by which it is obtained; they will take the next that comes to hand, and content themselves with earthly pleasures, rather than they will ascend to heaven to seek it; and yet when all is done, they must have it there, or be without it.

A heart in heaven will be a most excellent preservative against temptations to sin. It will keep the heart well employed. When we are idle, we tempt the devil to tempt us; as careless persons make thieves. A heart in heaven can reply to the tempter, as Nehemiah did, *I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come.* It hath no leisure to be lustful or wanton, ambitious or worldly. If you were but busy in your lawful callings, you would not be so ready to hearken to temptations; much less if you were also busy above with God. Would a judge be persuaded to rise from the bench, when he is sitting upon life and death, to go and play with children in the streets? No more will a Christian, when he is taking a survey of his eternal rest, give ear to the alluring charms of Satan. The children of that kingdom should never have time for trifles, especially when they are employed in the affairs of the kingdom; and this employment is one of the saint's chief preservatives from temptations.

A heavenly mind is the freest from sin, because it hath truer and livelier apprehensions of spiritual things. . . . The men of the world, that dwell below, and know no other conversation but earthly, no wonder if their *understandings be darkened*, and Satan *takes them captive at his will*. How can worms and moles see, whose dwelling is always in the earth? While this dust is in their eyes, no wonder they mistake gain for godliness, sin for grace, the world for God, their own wills for the law of Christ, and, in the issue, hell for heaven. But when a Christian withdraws himself from his worldly thoughts, and begins to converse with God in heaven, methinks he is, as Nebuchadnezzar, taken from the beasts of the field to the throne, and *his reason returneth unto him*. When he hath had a glimpse of eternity, and looks down on the world again, how doth he charge with folly his neglects of Christ, his fleshly pleasures, his earthly cares! How doth he say to his *laughter, It is mad*; and to his vain *mirth, What doth it*? How doth he verily think there is no man so truly mad as wilful sinners, and unworthy slights of Christ and glory. . . .

A heavenly mind is also fortified against temptations, because the affections are thoroughly prepossessed with the high delights of another world. He that loves most, and not he that only knows most, will most easily resist the motions of sin.

The will doth as sweetly relish goodness, as the understanding doth truth; and here lies much of a Christian's strength. . . .

Besides, whilst the heart is set on heaven, a man is under God's protection. If Satan then assault us, God is more engaged for our defence, and will doubtless stand by us, and say, *My grace is sufficient for thee*. When a man is in the way of God's blessing, he is in the less danger of sin's enticing. Amidst thy temptations, Christian reader, use much this powerful remedy; keep close with God by a heavenly mind; follow your business above with Christ, and you will find this a surer help than any other. *The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath*, Prov. xv. 24. Remember that *Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation*; for he *walked with God*: and that God said to Abraham, *Walk before me and be thou perfect*.

BAXTER.

#### *On Christian love and charity.*

O DIVINE love! the sweet harmony of souls! the music of angels! the joy of God's own heart! the very darling of his bosom! the source of true happiness! the pure quintessence of heaven! that which reconciles the jarring principles of the world, and makes them all chime together! that which melts men's hearts into one another! See how St. Paul describes it, and it cannot choose but enamour your affections towards it: *Love envieth not, it is not puffed up, it doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things*. I may add in a word, it is the best natured thing, the best complexioned thing in the world. Let us express this sweet harmonious affection in these jarring times: that so, if it be possible, we may tune the world into better music. Especially in matters of religion let us strive with all meekness to instruct and convince one another. Let us endeavour to promote the Gospel of peace, the dove-like Gospel with a dove-like spirit. This was the way by which the Gospel at first was propagated in the world: *Christ did not cry, nor lift up his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he did not break, and the smoking flax he did not quench*; and yet he brought forth judgment unto victory. He whispered the Gospel to us from

Mount Sion, in a still voice; and yet the sound thereof went out quickly throughout all the earth. The Gospel at first came down upon the world gently and softly, like the dew upon Gideon's fleece; and yet it quickly soaked quite through it: and doubtless this is the most effectual way to promote it farther. Sweetness and ingenuity will more command men's minds than passion, sourness, and severity: as the soft pillow sooner breaks the force of a blow than the hardest marble. Let us *follow truth in love*: and of the two indeed, be contented rather to miss of the conveying of a speculative truth, than to part with love. When we would convince men of any error by the strength of truth, let us withal pour the sweet balm of love upon their heads. Truth and love are two the most powerful things in the world; and when they both go together, they cannot easily be withstood. The golden beams of truth, and the silken cords of love, twisted together, will draw men on with a sweet violence whether they will or no.

Let us take heed we do not sometimes call that zeal for God and his Gospel, which is nothing else but our own tempestuous and stormy passion. True zeal is a sweet, heavenly, and gentle flame, which maketh us active for God, but always within the sphere of love. It never calls for *fire from heaven* to consume those that differ a little from us in their apprehensions. It is like that kind of lightning (which the philosophers speak of) that melts the sword within, but singeth not the scabbard: it strives to save the soul, but hurteth not the body. True zeal is a loving thing, and makes us always active to edification, and not to destruction. If we keep the fire of zeal within the chimney, in its own proper place, it never doth any hurt; it only warmeth, quickeneth and enliveneth us: but if once we let it break out, and catch hold of the thatch of our flesh, and kindle our corrupt nature, and set the house of our body on fire, it is no longer zeal, it is no heavenly fire, it is a most destructive and devouring thing. True zeal is an *ignis lambens*, a soft and gentle flame, that will not scorch one's hand; it is no predatory or voracious thing: but carnal and fleshly zeal is like the spirit of gunpowder set on fire, that tears and blows up all that stands before it. True zeal is like the vital heat in us, that we live upon, which we never feel to be angry or troublesome; but though

it gently feed upon the radical oil within us, that sweet balsam of our natural moisture, yet it lives lovingly with it, and maintains that by which it is fed: but that other furious and distempered zeal is nothing else but a fever in the soul. To conclude, we may learn what kind of zeal it is that we should make use of in promoting the Gospel, by an emblem of God's own given us in the Scripture, those fiery tongues that upon the day of Pentecost sat upon the Apostles; which sure were harmless flames, for we cannot read that they did any hurt, or that they did so much as singe a hair of their heads.

I will therefore conclude this with that of the Apostle; *Let us keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*. Let this soft and silken knot of love tie our hearts together; though our heads and apprehensions cannot meet, as indeed they never will, but always stand at some distance off from one another. Our zeal, if it be heavenly, if it be true vestal fire kindled from above, will not delight to tarry here below, burning up straw and stubble and such combustible things, and sending up nothing but gross earthy fumes to heaven; but it will rise up, and return back pure as it came down, and will be ever striving to carry up men's hearts to God along with it. It will be only occupied about the promoting of those things which are unquestionably good; and when it moves in the irascible way, it will quarrel with nothing but sin. Here let our zeal busy and exercise itself, every one of us beginning first at our own hearts. Let us be more zealous than ever we have yet been in fighting against our lusts, in pulling down those *strongholds of sin and Satan* in our hearts. Here let us exercise all our courage and resolution, our manhood and magnanimity.

CUDWORTH.

Now, how well does this express the nature of charity! for, what else is love, but a sweet breathing of the Holy Spirit upon our passions, whereby the Holy Ghost does, as it did in the beginning of Genesis, move by a cherishing, quieting virtue, upon the sea of our passions! Did not the same Spirit come to Elijah in a soft whisper? he walks not, *in turbine*, in a strong wind, to raise a tempest in our affections. Now, when we have received this *ipsissimam Dei particulam*, (as Plato said of the soul,) this shred or portion of the

Holy Spirit, which is charity, how evenly and temperately do we behave ourselves to God, and all the world besides! how willingly and obediently do we submit ourselves to the performance of whatsoever our faith for God's word doth enjoin us!...

Charity is a virtue which never goes alone, and is busied in solitary places, being reserved and excluded from the society and communion of other graces; but it is that which seasons gives life and efficacy to, all the rest; without which, if it were possible for me to enjoy all the graces that the bountiful hand of God ever showered upon a reasonable creature, yet, if St. Paul speaks truth, I should be nothing worth: it is that which fulfils all the commandments. This is evident to all that shall but slightly, and in haste, read over 1 Cor. xiii., beginning with verse 4, and so onwards; where we may behold almost all the virtues that can be named, enwrapt in one virtue of charity and love, according to the several acts thereof, changed and transformed into so many several graces: it *suffereth long*, and so it is longanimity; it is *kind*, and so it is courtesy; it *vaunteth not itself*, and so it is modesty; it is *not puffed up*, and so it is humility; it is *not easily provoked*, and so it is lenity; it *thinketh no evil*, and so it is simplicity; it *rejoiceth in the truth*, and so it is verity; it *beareth all things*, and so it is fortitude; it *believeth all things*, and so it is faith; it *hopeth all things*, and so it is confidence; it *endureth all things*, and so it is patience; it *never faileth*, and so it is perseverance.

CHILLINGWORTH.

The whole church is the spiritual temple of God. Every believer is a living stone, laid in those sacred walls: what is our Christian love, but the mortar or cement, whereby these stones are fast joined together, to make up this heavenly building? without which, that precious fabric could not hold long together; but would be subject to disjoining, by those violent tempests of opposition, wherewith it is commonly beaten upon. There is no place for any loose stone in God's edifice: the whole church is one entire body: all the limbs must be held together by the ligaments of Christian love; if any one will be severed, and affect to subsist of itself, it hath lost its place in the body. Thus the Apostle: that we, *being sincere in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the Head,*

*even Christ: From whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body, unto the edifying of itself in love*, Eph. iv. 15, 16.

But, in case there happen to be differences in opinion concerning points not essential, not necessary to salvation; this diversity may not breed an alienation of affection. That charity, which can cover a multitude of sins, may much more cover many small dissensions of judgment. We cannot hope to be all, and at all times, equally enlightened. At how many and great weaknesses of judgment, did it please our merciful Saviour to connive, in his domestic disciples! they, that had so long sat at the sacred feet of him that spake as never man spake, were yet to seek for those Scriptures which had so clearly foretold his resurrection, John xx. 9: and, after that, were at a fault for the manner of his kingdom, Acts i. 6: yet he, that breaks not the bruised reed, nor quenches the smoking flax, falls not harshly upon them for so foul an error and ignorance; but entertains them with all loving respect, not as followers only, but as friends, John xv. 15. And his great Apostle, after he had spent himself in his unweariable endeavours upon God's church, and had sown the seeds of wholesome and saving doctrine every where, what rank and noisome weeds of erroneous opinions rose up under his hand in the churches of Corinth, Galatia, Ephesus, Colosse, Philippi, and Thessalonica! these he labours to root out, with much zeal, with no bitterness: so opposing the errors, as not alienating his affection from the churches. These, these must be our precedents; pursuing that charge of the prime Apostle; *Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous*, 1 Pet. iii. 8: and that passionate and adjuring obtestation of the Apostle of the Gentiles: *If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies; fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind*, Phil. ii. 1, 2. This is it, that gives beauty, strength, glory to the church of God upon earth; and brings it nearest to the resemblance of that triumphant part above, where there is all perfec-



tion of love and concord. In imitation whereof, the Psalmist, sweetly; *Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is, brethren, to dwell together in unity!* Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

BP. HALL.

He that has the love that is in Christ, let him keep the commandments of Christ. For who is able to express the obligation of the love of God? What man is sufficient to declare, as is fitting, the excellency of its beauty? The height to which charity leads is inexpressible. Charity unites us to God; charity covers the multitude of sins, 1 Pet. iv. 8. Charity endures all things, 1 Cor. xiii. 7; is long-suffering in all things. There is nothing base and sordid in charity. Charity lifts not itself up above others; admits of no divisions; is not seditious, but does all things in peace and concord. By charity were all the elect of God made perfect: without it nothing is pleasing and acceptable in the sight of God. Through charity did the Lord join us unto himself, whilst, for the love that he bore towards us, our Lord Jesus Christ gave his own blood for us, by the will of God; his flesh for our flesh, his soul for our souls.

Ye see, beloved, how great and wonderful a thing charity is, and how that no expressions are sufficient to declare its perfection. But who is fit to be found in it? Even such only as God shall vouchsafe to make so. Let us, therefore, pray to him, and beseech him, that we may be worthy of it; that so we may live in charity, being unblamable, without human propensities, without respect of persons. All the ages of the world, from Adam even unto this day, are passed away; but they who have been made perfect in love have, by the grace of God, obtained a place among the righteous, and shall be made manifest in the judgment of the kingdom of Christ. For it is written, *Enter into thy chambers for a little space, till my anger and indignation shall pass away:* Isa. xxvi. 20. Happy then shall we be, beloved, if we shall have fulfilled the commandments of God, in the unity of love; that so, through love, our sins may be forgiven us. For so it is written, *Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose mouth there is no guile,* Psal. xxxii. Now this blessing is fulfilled in those who are chosen by

God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.  
CLEMENT.

### *On Forgiveness of Injuries.*

FORGIVENESS is a lesson taught in every page of the word of God. The advice of Solomon is: *Say not, I will do unto another as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work,* Prov. xxiv. 29.—*If thy enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; if he be thirsty, give him water to drink; for thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head,* Prov. xxv. 22: that is, thou wilt melt his heart, and soften his resentment; and the Lord shall reward thee. The exhortation of the Apostles, expressed in every form, and on every occasion, is substantially this: *Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.* When Peter asked his divine Master how often he should forgive his offending brother, the answer showed that forgiveness had no bounds, that every offence must be forgiven. The precept is followed by a severe denunciation: *My heavenly Father shall deliver you to the tormentors, if you from your hearts forgive not every one his brother's trespasses.* This proves that your forgiveness must be complete, and without reserve. You may have calmed the transports of your rage, you may cease to pursue your adversary, and to seek his ruin. But you still harbour a secret resentment: you love to hear his character traduced; you see with pleasure the stroke of calamity fall upon him; his tolling bell sounds delightful in your ears. Or, if you are of a gentler disposition, still you use the common expression, 'I forgive, but I cannot forget.' But observe the words of Christ: you must *forgive from your hearts.* Your gall must become honey; the poison of asps must be changed into the milk of human kindness. This sentiment must be universal: *Love your enemies; bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you.* And a most persuasive reason is added, *that you may be called the children of your Father, which is in heaven,* who extends his favour alike to all; *who maketh his sun to rise on the evil, and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

But the most affecting argument still

remains. Behold the example of Jesus Christ! Behold him in that fearful hour, when he was reduced to that extremity of mental suffering, as to shudder at that fate, for which he had assumed the nature of man, and to cry out: *Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!* Behold him in those moments of affliction, which draw from him this pathetic exclamation: *My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!* Behold him suspended on the cross, in that fatal hour, when he can be supposed to have no other feeling than that of his torment. In those moments of agony and distress, unprecedented and inconceivable, surrounded by his tormentors and his murderers, his *love is stronger than death*, he prays for them! It is not enough that he does not bring down the thunders of heaven on their heads. It is not enough that he does not deliver them to eternal death. O no! he avails himself of all his influence with his Father in their behalf; he desires that the very blood, which they are shedding, may wash away the stains of their barbarity. He desires that the gates of heaven, which are open to receive him, may one day *lift up their everlasting heads* to make them partakers of eternal happiness. *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!* After his resurrection, he retains the same charity, the same forgiveness, the same love of his enemies. Go, says he to his disciples, *preach the Gospel to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* Let those, whose hands were imbrued in my blood; let him, who nailed my hands and my feet; let him, who thrust his spear into my side, have the first offer of my salvation.

When you have examined the extent of this love, this forgiveness, and this charity, in the great pattern of all excellence, suffer me to conduct you in imagination to the feet of the crucified Jesus. Bring with you your most detested enemies, those, who have wounded your honour, injured your character, ruined your interest; then let me ask you, whether your anger, your resentment, your desire of revenge, can still subsist at the sight of Jesus Christ, suspended on the cross, and in the agonies of death praying for his murderers?

Let me conjure you by the compassion of God, by the charity of Christ, to sacrifice your hatred, your animosities, and your vengeance, on the altar of gratitude. Learn from Jesus to love and to forgive!

Let the first idea excited in your minds by the injuries, which you suffer from the enmity, the envy, the jealousy, the ingratitude, and the perfidy of others, be the example and the precepts of that Saviour, who has said: *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!* Let the blood of Jesus, which implores pardon for you in heaven, obtain it from you for your brethren upon earth! Remember that charity is the darling attribute of him, who will one day be your Judge. Remember that if the principles of the Gospel of love and charity disarm you of your resentment against your enemies, the Divine justice will be disarmed against you. *If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.*

REV. DR. VALPY.

### *The excellence of Charity.*

NATURAL reason is offended with this baseness and shortness of words; for it is soon said, *Believe in Christ*; and again, *Love thy neighbour as thyself.* Therefore it despiseth both the doctrine of faith and true good works. Notwithstanding, this base and vile word of faith, as reason taketh it, *Believe in Christ*, is the power of God to the faithful, whereby they overcome sin, death, the devil, &c.; whereby also they attain salvation and eternal life. Thus to serve one another through love, that is, to instruct him that goeth astray, to comfort him that is afflicted, to raise up him that is weak, to help thy neighbour by all means possible, to bear with his infirmities, to endure troubles, labours, ingratitude, and contempt in the church, and in civil life and conversation to obey the magistrate, to give due honour to thy parents, to be patient at home with a forward wife and an unruly family, &c.: these, I say, are works which reason judgeth to be of no value. But indeed they are such works, that the whole world is not able to comprehend the excellency and worthiness thereof (for it doth not measure works or any other thing by the word of God, but by the judgment of wicked, blind, and foolish reason): yea, it knoweth not the value of any one of the least good works that can be, which are true good works indeed.

Therefore, when men dream that they know well enough the commandment of charity, they are utterly deceived. Indeed they have it written in their heart: for they naturally judge that a man ought to

do unto another, as he would another should do unto him. But it followeth not therefore that they understand it; for if they did, they would also perform it indeed, and would prefer love and charity before all their works. They would not so highly esteem their own superstitious toys, as to go with a heavy countenance, hanging down the head, to live unmarried, to live with bread and water, to dwell in the wilderness, to be poorly apparelled, &c. These monstrous and superstitious works, which they have devised and chosen unto themselves, God neither commanding nor approving the same, they esteem to be so holy and so excellent, that they surmount and darken charity, which is, as it were, the sun of all good works. So great and incomprehensible is the blindness of man's reason, that it is unable, not only to judge rightly of the doctrine of faith, but also of external conversation and works. Wherefore we must fight strongly, as well against the opinions of our own heart, to the which we are naturally more inclined in the matter of salvation than to the word of God, as also against the counterfeit visor and holy show of our own will-works: that so we may learn to magnify the works which every man doth in his vocation, although they seem outwardly never so base and contemptible, if they have the warrant of God's word; and, contrariwise, to despise those works which reason chooseth without the commandment of God, seem they never so excellent and holy.

LUTHER.

#### *On Christian Candour.*

CANDOUR, I think, may in general be considered as regarding rather persons than sentiments; though, indeed, when sentiments are embraced by any, that are fundamentally wrong, it will be very difficult to separate them, and impossible not to involve the person embracing them, and continuing in them, in the conclusions which we draw as to the sentiments. Candour, therefore, must respect either persons who do not hold fundamental errors, or persons who do; and its operations should be very different, according to these different objects. With regard to those who are not fundamentally wrong, it will exercise itself both towards their persons and their sentiments. It will lead us to make all allowances for the weakness and infirmities of human nature, even in those things which appear to us contrary to the

clearest evidence; and in things which are doubtful to suspect our own judgments, and grant to others a right of determining and a possibility of determining better than ourselves. This, I think, is the most peculiar province of candour. If it be exercised towards those who hold fundamental errors, it must be exercised towards their persons, but by no means to their sentiments. When I speak of fundamental error, I mean not only that which is really so, but that which, upon mature and deliberate judgment, appears to me to be so. For, however disposed to candour, if my mind firmly embraces such a view, it must have the same effect upon me, whether in itself right or wrong; and I cannot help pronouncing that, according to my judgment, it is so in all its consequences. It is impossible, therefore, to view any sentiments in such a light, and at the same time to suppose, that they who embrace them are fundamentally right. I must totally condemn such opinions, or give up the essential propriety of my own; yea, must hold this self-evident contradiction, that certain principles of faith are absolutely essential to Christianity; and yet the contrary principles of faith do not destroy the being of Christianity. Since candour then cannot be exercised towards such sentiments, but only to the persons who embrace them, the next consideration is, how far the persons themselves can be freed from the determination which we make as to the sentiments, and in what way my candour must exercise itself towards these. I must now suppose that a person has, upon deliberate and serious inquiry, embraced these views; that he espouses them, professes them, and maintains them. I would here allow much to human infirmity, but, I believe, much more must be allowed for human depravity. And, while I pronounce that such views are contrary to the essential doctrines of Christianity, if I believe what I say, I cannot but conceive, that he who embraces them is, at present, uninterested in the Christian covenant, destitute of that which belongs to the essential character of a Christian, and as far from Christ, yea, farther, than a virtuous heathen. How then shall I exercise my candour? What is its business here? Surely not to pronounce that he may be right; yea, may be right if he continue in his present views; but to feel for him as a fellow-sinner, that knows something of the depravity of the human heart; to pity his si-

tuation; to pray that his eyes may be enlightened by the divine teaching of that Spirit, that *leads into all necessary truth*, and those corrupt principles of his heart, which have been the sources of his erroneous judgment, may be changed by Almighty grace. This is all that true candour can possibly do, till either I coincide with him in sentiment, or give up my views of the necessity of such truth, and feel that, however excellent, it is not absolutely important. But I cannot, for the sake of extenuating human infirmity, or guilt, either deny what I conceive to be truth, or the importance of it: nor would it be of any utility if I could; for whatever I may wish to conceive of the state of such a person, the real matter of fact will not be affected by my kind desires, or those hopes which friendship and compassion have led me to form. For, after all, candour must have certain limits, and those limits are truth. . . . I conceive, likewise, that great difference must be made between those who, through weakness of judgment, the trial of faith, or through the power of temptation, may at times be induced to give too much attention to unbelieving and doubtful apprehensions, and those who have fixed their creed in error, and confessedly avow and defend it. The waverings of an honest heart are essentially different from the bold assumptions of unsanctified reasonings and corrupt reasoners. Wherever we can hope we discern the evidence of the former; it gives us a fair opening for the kindest exercise of benevolence and candour; but wherever we discern the latter, it is *repentance to an acknowledgment of the truth* that can alone induce any favourable opinion or expectation. There is likewise another case where candour seems peculiarly suitable. A person who, having never obtained any great light or knowledge of divine things, or who is just now beginning to make serious inquiry about his soul, and the doctrines of Christianity, may for a time be enveloped in darkness and uncertainty, and how long we know not. But if there be any thing genuine and true at heart, there will be a disposition open to admit the truth; and we shall see such a one rather going forward, though by slow degrees, than receding. Here I can hope the best; I would wait the issue with patient expectation, and trust that, in the search of truth, it will one day break in with full lus-

tre and energy on his mind. But when, on the contrary, a man who has possessed superior light, has once professed the truths of the Gospel, but, by a retrograde motion, has been withdrawing from them by successive steps, till at last he is arrived at a total denial of what we esteem the great fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, or even within a few steps of open infidelity, must I not suspect that no trifling agent has been the cause of so awful a revolution in sentiment? must I not pronounce, in my own heart, his present state dangerous in the extreme, and the issue of such a conduct, if continued in, however affecting the consideration and severe the sentence, damnable? For there are such things (what they may be is not now the question) as *damnable heresies*.

REV. W. GOODE.

### On Hope.

TELL me, why dost thou hope, thou that continuest still in an unrepentant estate, in an habitual opposition to God's holy commandments? Art thou resolved to hope, because thou hast a mind to it, upon no ground, when thou oughtest rather to fear, almost to despair? or rather, canst thou persuade thyself in earnest, that this is indeed a hope? Is it not a fancy of thine own brain, or rather a temptation of the devil? Rom. v. 5. *Hope*, which is hope indeed, (which is not a fancy and chimera) *maketh not ashamed*, saith St. Paul: a man may with confidence, without confusion of face, profess and maintain it. But such a hope as this is, which is not a hope in earnest, how it will disgrace a man, and put him out of countenance, when God shall ask him why he did offer to hope?

Let thy conscience now answer me, who-soever thou art, in such a state. Thou that knowest how often God hath said, nay, sworn in his wrath, that none of those which continue disobedient shall enter into his rest! That none shall be partakers of the second resurrection unto glory, but those that have been partakers of the first unto grace. Canst thou for all this imagine, that God has such a peculiar, particular affection and respect to thee, who art yet a slave of the devil's, that he will be content to strain his truth and veracity, to break his oath for thy company? Shall the whole Scripture, which promises glory

to none but the godly, for thy sake be turned into a romance, into a melancholy tale to frighten children withal? No, no, assure thyself, it is not a conceit of election, which will save thee; thou must work, and work hard, in fear and trembling, before God will raise in thee the good spirit of Christian hope.

For, to say the truth, of all divine graces, hope is incomparably the hardest to attain unto: and the reason is evident, because it presupposes the possession of all other graces before it. And yet, for all this, nothing counted so easy, now-a-days, as hope, though men both are and resolve to be never so wicked: nay, and it is well if hope will serve their turn; they must have an infallible assurance, a divine faith of everlasting glory; and no manner of sins, though ever so heinous, ever so oft committed, shall be able to weaken this their assurance, that they are resolved of. This they think is a spell strong enough for the devil in all assails; when the devil is more joyed and comforted to see them so vainly delude themselves, than they themselves possibly can be. This for my first assertion: now follows the second.

When I say that the interest which a Christian ordinarily has in the promises of God, is *hope*; I mean, it is not absolute and irrespective, but depending upon conditions, namely, grace and perseverance therein. And this I took for granted, for I never heard of any yet, that denied perseverance to be necessary to salvation. If then his interest be by hope, then it is not yet by faith, properly so called; for it is not possible that the same object (considered with the same circumstances at the same time) should be the object both of faith and hope. For example, I believe by a divine faith, i. e. a faith grounded upon God's word, that there shall be a resurrection of the flesh, even of this flesh of mine; and I believe it firmly, because God hath said that he will bring it to pass; neither is there any condition of mine pre-required to the performance of this promise of God; for howsoever I behave myself here in this world, whether well or ill, it matters not, my behaviour cannot make God alter his resolution. Now, if I assuredly believe this, it would be improper and absurd for me to say, I hope there will be a resurrection of my body; for when I say, I hope any thing, I imply a possibility, in nature, that such a thing may

not be, which in this case I cannot do without infidelity.

But, on the other side, I hope that God will raise this flesh of mine unto glory, and I hope this upon safe grounds: therefore, if it be true that I hope it, I cannot properly be said to believe it, because my salvation yet depends upon conditions, namely, perseverance. Therefore, let me propose this one question to any man's conscience: Hast thou such an assurance of salvation given thee of God, that hope is quite evacuated in thee? Is there no such virtue left in thee as hope? Surely God hath dealt extraordinarily mercifully with thee; thou art many degrees gone beyond the state of those believers which St. Paul speaks of, and includes himself in the number, when he saith, *We live by hope*; for thou dost not live by hope, thou art exalted above it. Notwithstanding, I beseech you, consider well upon the matter (for it concerns you very much); be not too hasty to credit fancies, when conceits of assurance or impeccability shall be suggested to your minds. There may be great danger of confidence ungrounded; a confidence only taken upon trust from other men's words or opinions.

Do I go about now (think you) to bereave you, or cozen you of any spiritual comfort in this life? Do I envy any of you your assurance? Alas! why should I deal so with you? For I was never injured by you; or, if I were, surely, of all places, I would not make choice of this to execute my revenge in: or, if I thought that such assurance were ordinarily to be had, at least necessary to the making up of a justifying faith, (and have you never heard it said so?) would I not, think you, strive and endeavour to obtain it at any rate, even with the loss of all worldly comforts? Yes, certainly, I would count them all but as dross and dung in comparison of it. But I confess unto you, I am yet contented with enjoying heaven by hope: and I bless Almighty God, that he hath dealt so graciously with me, that I should dare to hope for it, and not be ashamed and confounded by my hope: and if there be any amongst you that will vouchsafe to content himself with such a neglected degree of comfort, with only hope, and no more, I will not enter into comparison with those that are perfect; but I dare promise him, that all those troublesome pleasures which do so ravish the men of this world, shall be as

nothing; yea, as afflictions and torments, in comparison of those spiritual, heavenly joys, which hope, well and legally achieved, will be able to afford us: no dangers will there be of terrors or jealousies, as if God would happen to grow weary, or repent himself of any grace or blessing which he hath bestowed upon us.

For, tell me; do you think that Adam, while he continued in his innocence, had any grudgings of suspicions or fears? Was he not, during that time, in as great a quiet and serenity of mind, as any of us dare hope for? And yet the most that he could do then, was to hope that he might continue in that state even to the end: the event shews, he could not have an infallible faith of his perseverance. If then such a contented, settled mind could accompany Adam in paradise, even when he knew it was in his power, with but reaching out his hand, and tasting an apple, to degrade himself from that happy estate; surely, we Christians have much more reason to rejoice in our hope, since we know assuredly, that as God has been so gracious to begin this good work in us, so he will not be wanting to perfect it even to the end, if we will but perform our parts, which he has already given us more than sufficient grace to do, and will never fail to supply us with more, for the asking; nay, more, (which are surer grounds to build upon, than ever Adam had) since we know, that not one, nor ten, nor a hundred sins, shall be able, so irreparably to cast us out of God's favour, but that he will be willing, upon our repentance, especially calling to mind his old mercies, to restore us again to our lost happiness.

Neither are we utterly excluded from all assurance; for there is a *πληροφορία τῆς ἐλπίδος*, a full assurance of hope, saith St. Paul, Heb. vi. 11. *This hope we have as a sure anchor of the soul*, fastened on a rock, ver. 19. The rock cannot fail us, the anchor will not; all the danger is in the cable or chain of spiritual graces, whereby we are fastened to this rock: if this chain but hold, no tempest, no winds, no floods can endanger us. And part of our hope respects this chain; for God has promised his willingness and readiness to strengthen it every day more and more, till our state shall be so changed, that there shall be no such things as tempests known, no tossings of waves, no tumults of winds, nor fear of leaking or decay in the vessel;

but all calmness and security. Add, for the attaining to this happy, unchangeable estate, where is it that we place our hope? truly our hope is even in thee, O God, who, if thou shalt think it convenient or necessary for us, wilt enlarge this our hope into confidence, and add unto that assurance, and swallow up all in possession: and that not for any merits of ours, but only for thy free undeserved mercies in our blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, in whom alone thou art well pleased: to whom, with thee, O Father, and the blessed Spirit, be ascribed by us, and thy whole church, the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen. CHILLINGWORTH.

### On Humility.

WE must not think in a giant-like pride to scale the walls of heaven by our own works, and by force thereof to take the strong fort of blessedness, and wrest the crown of glory out of God's hands whether he will or no. We must not think to commence a suit in heaven for happiness, upon such a poor and weak plea as our own external compliance with the old law is. We must not think to deal with God in the method of commutative justice, and to challenge eternal life as the just reward of our great merits, and the hire due to us for our labour and toil we have taken in God's vineyard. No, *God resists the proud, but giveth grace to the humble*, James iv. 6. It must be a humble and self-denying address of a soul dissolved into a deep and piercing sense of its own nothingness and unprofitableness, that can be capable of the Divine bounty: *he fills the hungry with good things, but the rich he sends empty away*, Luke i. 53. They are the hungry and thirsty souls, always gasping after the living springs of Divine grace, as the parched ground in the desert doth for the dew of heaven, ready to drink them in by a constant dependence upon God; souls that by a living, watchful, and diligent faith, spreading forth themselves in all obsequious reverence and love of him, wait upon him *as the eyes of a handmaid wait on the hand of her mistress*: these are they that he delights to satiate with his goodness. Those that being mastered by a strong sense of their own indigency, their pinching and pressing poverty, and his all-sufficient fulness, trust in him as an almighty Saviour, and in the most ardent

manner pursue after that perfection to which his grace is leading them; those that cannot satisfy themselves in a bare performance of some external acts of righteousness, or an external observance of a law without them, but with the most greedy and fervent ambition pursue after such an acquaintance with his Divine Spirit as may breathe an inward life through all the powers of their souls, and beget in them a vital form and soul of Divine goodness. These are the spiritual seed of faithful Abraham, the sons of the free-woman, and heirs of the promises, to whom all are made, *Yea, and Amen in Christ Jesus*, 2 Cor. i. 20. These are they which shall abide in the house for ever, when the sons of the bond-woman, those that are only Arabian proselytes, shall be cast out. REV. J. SMITH.

Examine whether you advance in humility. This is a silent but most excellent grace; and they who are most eminent in it are dearest to God, and most fit for the communications of his presence to them. Do you then feel your mind more emptied of proud and haughty imaginations; not prone so much to look back upon past services, which it has performed, as forward to those which are yet before you, and inward upon the remaining imperfections of your heart? Do you more tenderly observe your daily slips and miscarriages, and find yourself disposed to mourn over those things before the Lord, that once passed with you as slight matters; though when you come to survey them, as in the presence of God, you find they were not wholly involuntary, or free from guilt? Do you feel in your breast a deeper apprehension of the infinite majesty of the blessed God, and of the glory of his natural and moral perfections; so as, in consequence of these views, to perceive yourself (as it were) annihilated in his presence, and to shrink into less than nothing, and vanity, Isa. xl. 17. If this be your temper, God will look upon you with particular favor, and will visit you more and more with the distinguished blessings of his grace.

But there is another great branch and effect of Christian humility. Let me therefore farther inquire: are you more frequently renewing your application, your sincere, steady, determinate application, to the righteousness and blood of Christ,

as being sensible how unworthy you are to appear before God, otherwise than in him? And do the remaining corruptions of your heart humble you before him, though the disorders of your life are in a great measure cured? Are you more earnest to obtain the quickening influences of the Holy Spirit; and have you such a sense of your own weakness, as to engage you to depend, in all the duties you perform, upon the communications of his grace, to help your infirmities, Rom. viii. 26. Can you at the close of your most religious, exemplary, and useful days, blush before God for the deficiencies of them, while others, perhaps, may be ready to admire and extol your conduct? And while you give the glory of all that has been right to him, from whom the strength and grace has been derived, are you coming to the blood of sprinkling, to free you from the guilt which mingles itself even with the best of your services? Do you learn to receive the bounties of Providence, not only with thankfulness as coming from God, but with a mixture of shame and confusion too, under a consciousness that you do not deserve them, and are continually forfeiting them? And do you justify Providence in your afflictions and disappointments, even while many are flourishing around you in the full bloom of prosperity, whose offences have been more visible at least, and more notorious than yours. DR. DODDRIDGE.

If there be a favourite point in Scripture, it is the recommendation of humility. The truly humble, with all their imperfections, will be admitted into heaven; the proud, with all the virtue compatible with pride, will be excluded. Those doctrines, therefore, which support humility must be divine: those which nourish pride must be *earthly, sensual, devilish*. Now the evangelical doctrines just mentioned are all of the former sort. The more they are relished and admired, the more do they direct the mind to honour God, to feel even infinite obligation to him, to entertain the lowest ideas of ourselves, to confound the pride of intellect, of riches, of virtue, of every thing human. To sing *salvation to God and the Lamb*, to confess that we only deserve destruction, and to ascribe our deliverance from it to the atoning blood of Jesus, this is the employment of heaven. The tastes and tempers adapted to such employment must be formed here on earth

by *grace*; and the whole work of the Spirit is to produce and support these dispositions. And, in the words and actions of holy men, we have seen this effect. They believed heartily the truth of doctrines the most humiliating. They were *poor in spirit*, and *patient* under the severest treatment and the most cruel injuries, because they were conscious of deserving much worse: they were contented in the meanest circumstances, because they felt the beauty of *his* condescension, *who though he was rich became poor for their sakes*, and who has provided for them sure and eternal riches. They were serene and confident in God, because they viewed *him* as their Father through the grace of Christ: they were full of charity, because they knew the love of God in Christ; and *in honour they preferred others* to themselves, because they were ever conscious of their own depravity: in fine, they gladly endured reproach for Christ's sake, because they knew that his kingdom was not of this world.

Now, take from these men the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel, and all the motives and springs within them of those actions, which are peculiar to the Christian, are annihilated. Mere morals, as taught by sensible heathens, and whatever was by them esteemed reputable in social life, may remain; but that, which is properly of a pious and humble nature, is no more.

For, whoever daily feels himself to be helpless, corrupt, and unworthy; the man, whose hope of Divine favour cannot exist for a moment, but under the belief of the most stupendous grace; the man, who is compelled to pray, by the sense of his constant wants, and who experiences the answer of prayer, by repeated supernatural aids; such a one must be habituated to the perpetual exercise of cultivating *humbling* reflections concerning himself, and *grateful* feelings towards his Maker. It is easy to see what a foundation is here laid of meekness, gentleness, modesty, submission to the will of God, and of genuine compassion for the most wicked and most injurious; the truly humbled Christian always remembering that he himself, by nature, is *a child of wrath* as well as others. Nor is there one among the numerous virtues, for which the primitive Christians were so much renowned, but it may be traced up to these principles.

MILNER.

What is humility? It is not a mere sense of our weakness as creatures, nor a general acknowledgment that we are sinners; but a deep and abiding consciousness of our guilty and undone state; a consciousness, that darkness itself is not more opposite to light, than we are to the pure and holy law of God. It is a sense of our utter alienation from God, yea, and of enmity against him; insomuch, that *every imagination of the thoughts of our heart is only evil continually*: it is such a sense of this as makes us really to *lothe and abhor ourselves, and to repent before God in dust and ashes*. This is that *broken and contrite heart which God will not despise*. But where do we find persons penetrated with this contrition, and smiting on their breasts, and crying for mercy as sinners deserving of God's wrath and indignation? Or, if we saw one under such distressing apprehensions, who amongst us would not be ready to think that he carried matters to excess; and that, unless he had been guilty of some sins beyond what were commonly committed, he had no need for such excessive griefs and sorrows? It is well known that such penitents are few; and that such comforters, if indeed disgust did not preclude any attempt to administer comfort, would be found in every company we meet with. But to what is all this owing? It arises from men's ignorance of the Law: they try not either themselves or others by so high a standard; and, being insensible of their departures from it, they see no cause for such humiliation on account of those departures. In fact, the very idea of such humility enters not into the mind of the natural man: and, copious as were the languages of Greece and Rome, they had no word whereby to express it. With the word which they used to express their idea of humility, they associated rather the notion of meanness, than of an exalted virtue: and, though all of us profess to admire humility as a grace, there is not in the universe a man, in his natural state, that either possesses or approves of it, according to its real import. REV. C. SIMON.

Humility is the first-fruit of religion. In the mouth of our Lord there is no maxim so frequent as the following: *Whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted*. Religion, and that alone, teaches absolute



humility; by which I mean, a sense of our *absolute* nothingness in the view of infinite greatness and excellence. That sense of inferiority which results from the comparison of men with each other is often an unwelcome sentiment, forced upon the mind, which may rather embitter the temper than soften it: that which devotion impresses is soothing and delightful. The devout man loves to lie low at the footstool of his Creator, because it is then he attains the most lively perceptions of the Divine excellence, and the most tranquil confidence in the Divine favour. In so august a presence he sees all distinctions lost, and all beings reduced to the same level. He looks at his superiors without envy, and his inferiors without contempt: and when from this elevation he descends to mix in society, the conviction of superiority, which must in many instances be felt, is a calm inference of the understanding, and no longer a busy, importunate passion of the heart. REV. R. HALL.

*Spirit of Meekness honourable.*

LET the world account it a despicable simplicity, seek you still more of that dove-like spirit, the spirit of meekness and blessing. It is a poor glory to vie in railings, to contest in that faculty, or in any kind of vindictive returns of evil: the most abject creatures have abundance of that great spirit, as foolish, poor-spirited persons account it; but *it is the glory of man to pass by a transgression*, Prov. xix. 11; it is the noblest victory. And as we mentioned, the highest example, God, is our pattern in love and compassions: we are well warranted to endeavour to be like him in this. Men esteem much more highly some other virtues which make more show, and trample upon these, love, and compassion, and meekness. But though these violets grow low, and are of a dark colour, yet they are of a very sweet and diffusive smell, odoriferous graces; and the Lord propounds himself our example in them, Matt. v. 44, 45, *To love them that hate you, and bless them that curse you*, is to be truly *the children of your Father*, your Father which is in heaven. It is a kind of perfection. *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect*, ver. 48. *He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good*. Be you like it: how-soever men behave themselves, keep you your course, and let your benign influence,

as you can, do good to all. And Jesus Christ sets in himself these things before us, *learn of me*, not to heal the sick, or raise the dead, but *learn, for I am meek and lowly in heart*, Matt. xi. 29. And if you be his followers, this is your way, as the Apostle here addeth, *Hereunto are you called*; and this is the end of it, agreeably to the way, *that you may inherit a blessing*.

LEIGHTON.

*Guards against levity of Temper.*

THE sublime truths of Christianity demand our frequent review. Let us often rise high in our thoughts, and let our faith look far backwards to the eternal ages before this world was. Let us contemplate the love of God the Father, in contriving our salvation, before he stretched abroad these heavens, or laid the foundations of this earth. Let us think of the condescension of his mercy, when he chose fallen perishing sinners to be the objects of his everlasting love. Let us dwell upon his compassion to man, when he appointed his own Son to take flesh upon him, and to become our Mediator and Sacrifice. Let us survey with holy wonder the various glories of the Son of God, *by whom and for whom all things were made; who upholds all things by the word of his power: and who is the express image of his Father*. Let us behold him consenting to hide all these honours behind a veil of flesh and blood, walking the streets of Jerusalem, and travelling on foot through the villages of Israel, attended with a few poor despicable men, or surrounded with the reproaches of the blaspheming Jews. Let us look upon this illustrious person, who was adored by angels, yet unknown and unglorified among the sons of men, and humbled, even to death and the grave; then gaze on him rising again from the dead, and *declared to be the Son of God, with power, exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high*, and ruling all the millions of inhabitants of the visible and invisible worlds. Surely if our souls were inured to the meditation of such sublime wonders as these, we should not easily immerse ourselves in trifles and fooleries.

Again, let us meditate on the more awful doctrines, the more solemn and dreadful truths of our religion, and these will be an effectual restraint to a vain temper of mind. Let us think on the justice

of God, manifested in the destruction of sinners, in all ages, when it appeared in a prodigious flood of water, and with a deluge of ruin testified against the wickedness of the old world; and when it came down in flaming fire upon Sodom and upon the cities of the Plain. Let us meditate on the *wrath of God*, that has been revealed in numerous instances *against all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*. Let us contemplate that divine and severe justice, that appeared in the sufferings and death of God's own Son, when it *pleased the Father to bruise him, and to make his soul an offering for sin*. Let us think of his agonies in the garden, and on the cross, when he bore the weight of our iniquities, and stood in the place of sinners. Let us send our thoughts down to the regions of death and hell, and behold the fallen angels, bound in chains of darkness, and groaning under present torments, yet waiting for the day of greater vengeance. Let us think with ourselves what millions of our fellow-sinners, the sons and daughters of Adam, lie there banished from the presence of the Lord, and tormented with fire in their consciences, without remedy, and without hope, and say, why are not we there too?

Let us often look forward to the awful moment of our death, and the time of our departure from all the flattering scenes of this present world. This will put a damp upon the vainest mind, and hang with a painful weight upon the sons of mirth and levity. This will be a means to restrain us from that foolish and trifling behaviour, which otherwise our tempers might incline us to. And let us remember the solemn hour when we must stand before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ, divested of all these gaudy shows of life, in which we are now ready to pride ourselves; and there we must receive a sentence without repeal, which shall send us to heaven or to hell at once, and fix our everlasting state. These are terrors or glories too solemn to be trifled with; these are thoughts that will hold our souls awake and serious; this will preserve that gravity of mind which becomes a Christian, and keep us in a prepared temper to fulfil present duty, and to wait the final event of all things. DR. WATTS.

*We should be waiting on God in the way of His Providence.*

WAIT upon God in the way of his

Providence. Wait upon him as he is a faithful Creator, 1 Pet. iv. 19; much more since the title of being our Redeemer is added to that of our Creator, which strengthens his relation to us. Not to wait, disparageth his care, bounds his power, or reflects upon his wisdom: as if he had stripped himself of his immense goodness, and forgot both his promise and his people; as if he had cancelled the covenant, and given up his whole interest to the lusts of men. Wait in the saddest appearances. The hour of Christ's death was dismal in the world, and darkness was upon the earth; a miraculous eclipse of the sun, taken notice of by the very heathens; yet were we never nearer to happiness than in that dreadful time when our Saviour was most dyed in his own blood. The sanguine complexion of the evening sky is a presage of a fair succeeding morning; so, many times is the red vesture of the church.

1. Wait upon him obediently. Commit your souls to God, but in well-doing, 1 Pet. iv. 19. Use no indirect means; a contempt of the precept cannot consist with faith in either promise or providence. The obeying part is ours, the governing part is God's. *Let not thine heart envy sinners, but be thou in the fear of the Lord all the day long, for surely there is an end, and thine expectation shall not be cut off*, Prov. xxiii. 17. God will govern all the day, but we must fear him all the day. When fear on our part, attends government on God's part, there will be an end of our carnal fears, and a good issue of our hopes. The greatest deliverances of his church have been when his people has stood still, Exod. xiv. 13. As that deliverance was a type of all future ones, and a ground of faith, so the carriage God enjoined was a rule to his people in all future straits. It is against the laws of God's government for those listed in his service to stir without order. The law is our standing rule of duty. Providence cannot be a standing visible rule, because of the variety and seeming crossness of it sometimes to our apprehensions. Do not presume to lead God, but be led by him. It is our safety to follow him; it is our sin and danger to presume to be his directors. We may lose ourselves when we are our own blind guides, and fall into a ditch; but when we follow God, he hath wisdom to foresee the precipices we may

stumble into, and goodness to divert us from them. By interposing carnal devices, men may perhaps have their ends, but with little comfort, perhaps much bitterness to themselves. Jacob by his hasty using his own and his mother's sinful project for the blessing, got it indeed, but a cross too, for he was a man of sorrows all his days. By waiting in God's way, we shall have our ends with more sweetness, because purely a fruit of God's care and goodness.

2. Wait patiently. How often are our spirits troubled about future events, and afraid of the evil which threatens us, as if we were in pain for God, and in doubt of his wise conduct! Think not God's time too long. He waits as much for a fit opportunity to show his mercy as you can wait for the enjoyment of it. *Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you; blessed are all they that wait for him*, Isa. xiii. 18. It is a part of our blessedness to wait for God, since it is a part of God's kindness to wait for a fit season to be gracious to us. It is not for us to prescribe rules to God, but follow the rules he prescribes to us. He hath freely made his promise, let him be master of his own time to make it good. He will show as much wisdom in accomplishing, as he did mercy in declaring it. God can do things in a moment, but it is his wisdom to take time, that his people may have time to exercise their trust, their hope, and their patience. He will take time in the ways of his providence as well as he did in the works of creation. He allotted six days to that which he could have framed in a minute. He is Judge of what is needful for us, and when it is needful for us. If God should give us that, which is a mercy in its own nature, many times when we desire it, it might not be a mercy. If we will trust the skill of his wisdom for the best season, it cannot but be a mercy, for he will give it us with his own glory and grace wrapt up in it, which will make it sweeter to himself when his wisdom is honoured, and sweeter to us when our good is promoted. God's methods appear in the end both wiser and better than our frames. Infinite goodness aims more at our welfare, than our shallow self-love; and infinite wisdom can conduct things to our welfare better than our short-sighted skill. He that knows all the moments of time, knows best how to time his actions. As God stayed for a fulness

of time to bring the great redemption by Christ into the world; so he stays for a fulness of time to bring all the great consequences and appendices of it unto his church. Every thing is beautiful in his time. In its own time, in God's time, not in ours, Eccles. iii. 11.

3. Wait constantly. Though the wheels of Providence seem sometimes to stand still, Ezek. i. 21, and God seems to put a period to the care of his church; yet let not us neglect our duty. Wait a while, and the wheels will be put upon their former rolling. Some particular passages of Providence may trouble us for a while, but in the issue God may answer our desires above our expectations, and thereby confute our fears. His providences are sometimes like rivers that run under ground, out of sight; but will rise again with a delightful stream, with some new medicinal quality, contracted from the earth by the way. Joseph, a prisoner, waits upon God for his liberty, and God gives him freedom with preferment. God can bring about his people's safety by unexpected ways. Who would have imagined before, that his own dream should make him a captive, and Pharaoh's dream make him a favourite? The chief butler remembers him not, till Pharaoh was in an exigency, and the divining skill of the wise men of Egypt confounded. Joseph lost nothing by waiting upon God, who made so many circumstances concur to promote his honour. Wait therefore upon him in the sorest afflictions. The church is only afflicted in mercy, but the enemies of it are pulled up by the roots. *I am with thee to save thee; though I make a full end of the nations whither I have scattered thee, yet I will not make a full end of thee, but I will correct thee in measure*, Jer. xxx. 11. God deals with his people as a father, who corrects to reform, not to destroy; but with his enemies he deals as a judge. God's providence, like Moses' rod, may seem sometimes a devouring serpent, but it is to convince the Egyptians, and deliver the Israelites.

4. Wait in the use of lawful means for preservation. Not to use means, is to slight his providence, not to trust it. It seems not to consist with the wisdom of God to order things always so as to be necessitated to put forth an extraordinary power in things which his creatures by a common providence can naturally accom-

plish. God saves by natural means; when they will not serve the turn, he will save by supernatural. God chose an ark to preserve Noah in. He did not want supernatural means for his preservation. He might have caught him up in a cloud, and continued him there till the drying up of the waters. Noah doth not dispute the business with God, but prepares an ark according to his order, and he was righteous in his obedience, as well as in his trust. God would not preserve our Saviour by a miracle, when ordinary means would serve the turn. He commands Joseph by his angel to flee into Egypt with the child, Matt. ii. 13. Joseph desires not God to preserve him by an extraordinary power, to save his pains of travelling; he submits to God's order, and God quickly clears the way for his return. Indeed sometimes the wheels of Providence are lifted up from the earth, and do not go in the ordinary tracks, Ezek. i. 19. But miracles must be left to God's pleasure; for us to desire them, is to tempt our great Governor.

CHARNOCK.

#### *On Retirement.*

It is indeed a standing miracle of the Gospel, that in reconciling man to God, it reconciles him to himself; that it makes him able to bear the sight of himself; and renders solitude and repose more agreeable to many, than all the intercourse and bustle of mankind. Nor is it by confining man's attention to himself, that it produces these wonderful effects. It is by bringing him to God, and by supporting him under the sense of his miseries, with the hope of a complete deliverance in a better life.

But for those who do not act above the principles of mere nature, it is impossible that they should exist in inactivity, and have leisure to contemplate themselves, without falling into chagrin and discontent. Man, who loves nothing but himself, hates nothing so much as to be left by himself. He seeks nothing but for himself, and yet avoids nothing more than himself; because when he looks within, he does not see himself such as he could wish; discovering in himself only a store of inevitable miseries, and a destitution of all real and solid good, which it is beyond his ability to replenish. PASCAL.

*Thou when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and shut the door. And the rea-*

son is plain. He who would pray, must first retire. The spirit of the world and the spirit of prayer are contrary the one to the other; and experience will teach any one that he cannot well pray in a crowd. Business, or pleasure, or even common conversation, if it be about the things of this world, and continue for any long time, will strangely indispose the mind for devotion; and the soul, before she can take her flight to heaven, must plume and balance her wings by holy meditation. She must rally her scattered and dissipated thoughts, and fix them on the business she is going about. She must consider the nature of God, to whom she is to pray; of herself who is to pray to him; and of those things for which she is to pray to him. She must know the sins she has been guilty of, to confess them; and the graces she stands in need of, to petition for them. All this is not to be done but by deep meditation; and meditation, which is the mother of devotion, is the daughter of retirement. They who do not meditate, cannot pray; and they who do not retire, can do neither. God help and have mercy on all those who are in this most wretched and deplorable state! as all must be, who pass their days in a senseless round of vain amusements and diversions, in a continual hurry and dissipation of thought, ignorant of the benefits and comforts of the closet, and therefore ignorant of the true state of their minds, ignorant of their Saviour, ignorant of their duty, ignorant of every thing which they were sent into the world to learn. Thus they live, and—thus they die! If, therefore, we conceive a dread of such a life and such a death (and too great a dread we cannot conceive), let us learn of holy Daniel, to commune with our own heart, and with God, in our chamber. And then let us judge ourselves to have made some progress in the divine life, when the pleasures we find there are preferred, as every experienced Christian knows they ought to be preferred, to all the pleasures the world can offer. BR. HORNE.

#### *Pleasure and Profit of Religious Retirement.*

It hath been ever a main obstruction to the practice of piety, that it hath been taken for no friend, or rather for an enemy, to profit; as both unprofitable and prejudicial to its followers; and many semblances

there are countenancing that opinion. For religion seemeth to smother or to slacken the industry and alacrity of men in following profit, many ways : by charging them to be content with a little, and careful for nothing ; by diverting their affections and cares from worldly affairs to matters of another nature, place and time, prescribing, in the first place, to seek things spiritual, heavenly and future ; by disparaging all secular wealth, as a thing in comparison to virtue and spiritual goods, very mean and inconsiderable ; by checking greedy desires and aspiring thoughts after it ; by debarring the most ready ways of getting it, (violence, exaction, fraud, and flattery,) yea, straightening the best ways, eager care and diligence ; by commending strict justice in all cases, and always taking part with conscience when it clasheth with interest ; by paring away the largest uses of wealth, in the prohibition of its free enjoyment to pride or pleasure ; by enjoying liberal communication thereof in ways of charity and mercy ; by engaging men to expose their goods sometimes to imminent hazard, sometimes to certain loss ; obliging them to forsake all things, and to embrace poverty for its sake. . . .

But voiding which prejudices, I shall propose some of those innumerable advantages, by considering which the immense profitableness of piety will appear. . . .

Piety doth virtually comprise within it all other profits, serving all the designs of them all : whatever kind of desirable good we can hope to find from any other profit, we may be assured to enjoy from it.

He that hath it is *ipso facto* vastly rich, is entitled to immense treasures of most precious wealth ; in comparison whereto, all the gold and all the jewels in the world are mere baubles. He hath interest in God, and can call him his, who is the *all*, and in regard to whom all things existent are less than nothing. The infinite power and wisdom of God belong to him, to be ever, upon all fit occasions, employed for his benefit. All the inestimable treasures of heaven are his, after this moment of life, to have and to hold for ever ; so that great reason had the wise man to say, that *In the house of the righteous is much treasure*. Piety therefore is profitable, as immediately instating in wealth : and whereas the desired fruits of profit are chiefly these—honour, power, pleasure, safety, liberty, ease, opportunity of getting

knowledge, means of benefiting others ; all these we shall see do abundantly accrue from piety, and, in truth, only from it.

The pious man is in truth most *honourable*. ‘*Inter homines pro summo est optimus,*’ saith Seneca ; whom Solomon translated thus, *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour*. He is dignified by the most illustrious titles ; a son of God, a friend and favourite to the Sovereign King of the World, an heir of Heaven, a denizen of the Jerusalem above ; titles far surpassing all those which worldly state doth assume. He is approved by the best and most infallible judgments, wherein true honour resideth. He is respected by God himself, by the holy angels, by the blessed saints, by all good and all wise persons, yea, commonly by all men ; for the effects of genuine piety are so venerable and amiable, that scarce any man can do otherwise than in his heart much esteem him that worketh them.

The pious man is also the most *potent* man. He hath a kind of omnipotency, because he can do whatever he will, that is, what he ought to do ; and, because the Divine Power is ever ready to assist him, in his pious enterprises, so that *He can do all things by Christ that strengtheneth him*. He is able to combat and vanquish him that is *the stout and mighty one* ; to wage war with happy success *against principalities and powers*. He conquereth and commandeth himself, which is the bravest victory, and noblest empire : he quelleth fleshly lusts, subdueth inordinate passions, and repelleth strong temptations. He, *by his faith, overcometh the world* with a conquest far more glorious than ever any Alexander or Cæsar could do. He, in fine, doth perform the most worthy exploits, and deserveth the most honourable triumphs that man can do.

The pious man also doth enjoy the only true, pure, and durable *pleasures* ; such pleasures as those of which the divine Psalmist singeth, *In thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore*. That *all joy in believing, that gaiety of hope*, that incessant *rejoicing in the Lord*, and *greatly delighting in his law*, that continual feast of a good conscience, that *serving the Lord with gladness*, that *exceeding gladness with God’s countenance*, that *comfort of the Holy Spirit*, that *joy unspeakable and full of glory* : the satisfaction resulting

from the contemplation of heavenly truth, from the sense of God's favour, and the pardon of his sins, from the influence of God's grace, from the hopes and anticipation of everlasting bliss; these are pleasures indeed, in comparison whereto all other pleasures are no more than sordid impurities, superficial touches, transient flashes of delight; such as should be insipid and unsavoury to a rational appetite; such as are tinctured with sourness and bitterness, have painful remorses or qualms consequent. All the pious man's performances of duty and of devotion are full of pure satisfaction and delight here; they shall be rewarded with perfect and endless joy hereafter.

As for *safety*, the pious man hath it most absolute and sure; he being guarded by Almighty power and wisdom; *resting under the shadow of God's wings*; God *upholding him with his hand, ordering his steps so that none of them shall slide, holding his soul in life, and suffering not his feet to be moved*; he being, by the grace and mercy of God, secured from the assaults and impressions of all enemies, from sin, and guilt, from the devil, world, and flesh, from death and hell, which are our most formidable, and in effect, only dangerous enemies.

As for *liberty*, the pious man most entirely and truly doth enjoy that; he alone is free from captivity to that cruel tyrant Satan, from the miserable slavery to sin, from the grievous dominion of lust and passion. He can do what he pleaseth, having a mind to do only what is good and fit. The law he observeth is worthily called *the perfect law of liberty*; the Lord he serveth pretendeth only to command free men and friends: *Ye are my friends*, said he, *if ye do whatever I command you*; and *if the Son set you free, then are ye free indeed*.

And for *ease*, it is he only that knoweth it; having his mind exempted from the distraction of care, from disorder of passion, from anguish of conscience, from the drudgeries and troubles of the world, from the vexations and disquiet which sin produceth. He findeth that made good to him, which our Lord inviting him did promise, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*. He feeleth the truth of those Divine assertions, *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose*

*mind is stayed on thee*; and *great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them*.

As for *knowledge*, the pious man alone doth attain it considerably, so as to become truly wise, and learned to purpose. *Evil men*, saith the wise man himself, who knew well, *understand not judgment: but they that seek the Lord understand all things*. It is the pious man that employeth his mind upon the most proper and worthy objects, that knoweth things which certainly best deserve to be known, that hath his soul enriched with the choicest notions; he skilleth to aim at the best ends, and to compass them by the fittest means; he can assign to each thing its due worth and value; he can prosecute things by the best methods, and order his affairs in the best manner: so that he is sure not to be defeated or disappointed in his endeavours, nor to mis-spend his care and pains, without answerable fruit. He hath the best Master to instruct him in his studies, and the best rules to direct him in his proceedings; he cannot be mistaken, seeing in his judgment and choice of things he conspireth with infallible wisdom. Therefore *ὁ εὐσεβὴν ἄνθρωπος φιλοσοφεῖ*, 'the pious man is the exquisite philosopher.' *The fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding. The fear of the Lord, as is said again and again in Scripture, is the head, or top of wisdom. A good understanding have all they that keep his commandments*.

Farther, the pious man is enabled and disposed, hath the power and the heart, most to benefit and to oblige others. He doth it by his succour and assistance, by his instruction and advice, which he is ever ready to yield to any man upon fit occasion: he doth it by the direction and encouragement of his good example; he doth it by his constant and earnest prayers for all men; he doth it by drawing down blessings from heaven on the place where he resideth. He is upon all accounts the most true, the most common Benefactor to mankind; all his neighbours, his country, the world, are in some way or other obliged to him: at least, he doeth all the good he can, and in wish doth benefit all men.

Thus all the fruits and consequences of profit, the which engage men so eagerly to pursue it, do in the best kind and high-

est degree, result from piety, and, indeed, only from it. DR. BARROW.

*What our Meditations often are, and what they ought to be.*

O THE carnal and unprofitable thoughts of men! We all meditate; one, how to do ill to others; another, how to do some earthly good to himself; another, to hurt himself under a colour of good, as how to accomplish his lewd desires, the fulfilling whereof proveth the bane of the soul; how he may sin unseen, and go to hell with the least noise of the world. Or, perhaps, some better minds bend their thoughts upon the search of natural things; the motions of every star; the reason and course of the ebbing and flowing of the sea; the manifold kinds of simples that grow out of the earth, and creatures that creep upon it, with all their strange qualities and operations; or perhaps the several forms of government and rules of state take up their busy heads; so that, while they would be acquainted with the whole world, they are strangers at home, and, while they seek to know all other things, they remain unknown of themselves. The God who made them, the vileness of their nature, the danger of their sins, the multitude of their imperfections, the Saviour that bought them, the heaven that he bought for them, are, in the mean time, as unknown, as unregarded, as if they were not. Thus do foolish children spend their time and labour in turning over leaves to look for painted babes, not at all respecting the solid matter under their hands. We fools, when will we be wise; and, turning our eyes from vanity, with that sweet singer of Israel, make God's statutes our song and meditation in the house of our pilgrimage? Earthly things proffer themselves with importunity—heavenly things must with importunity be sued to. Those, if they were not so little worth, would not be so forward, and, being forward, need not any meditation to solicit them; these, by how much more hard they are to intreat, by so much more precious they are being obtained, and therefore worthier our endeavour. As then we cannot go amiss, so long as we keep ourselves in the track of divinity, while the soul is taken up with the thoughts either of the Deity in his essence and persons, (sparing yet in this point, and more in faith and admiration than inquiry) or of his at-

tributes, his justice, power, wisdom, mercy, truth; or of his works, in the creation, preservation, government of all things; according to the Psalmist, *I will meditate of the beauty of thy glorious Majesty, and thy wonderful works*: so, most directly in our way, and best fitting our exercise of meditation, are those matters in divinity, which can most of all work compunction in the heart, and most stir us up to devotion. Of which kind are the meditations concerning Christ Jesus our Mediator, his incarnation, miracles, life, passion, burial, resurrection, ascension, intercession, the benefit of our redemption, the certainty of our election, the graces and proceeding of our sanctification, our glorious estate in paradise lost in our first parents, our present vileness, our inclination to sin, our several actual offences, the temptations and sleights of evil angels, the use of the sacraments, nature and practice of faith and repentance, the miseries of our life with the frailty of it, the certainty and uncertainty of our death, the glory of God's saints above, the awfulness of judgment, the terrors of hell, and the rest of this quality; wherein both it is fit to have variety, for that even the strongest stomach doth not always delight in one dish, and yet so to change, that our choice may be free from wildness and inconstancy. BP. HALL.

*Scripture Truths, when they do not enrich the Memory may still purify the Heart.*

WE must not measure the benefit we receive of the word according to what of it remains, but according to what effect it leaves behind. Lightning, than which nothing sooner vanisheth away, yet often breaks and melts the hardest and most firm bodies in its sudden passage. Such is the irresistible force of the word: the Spirit often darts it through us: it seems but like a flash, and gone; and yet it may break and melt down our hard hearts before it, when it leaves no impression at all upon our memories. I have heard of one, who, returning from an affecting sermon, highly commended it to some; and, being demanded what he remembered of it, answered, 'Truly, I remember nothing at all; but only, while I heard it, it made me resolve to live better than ever I have done; and so, by God's grace, I will.' Here was now a sermon lost to the memory, but not to the affections. To the

same purpose, I have somewhere read a story of one, who complained to an aged holy man, that he was much discouraged from reading the Scripture, because his memory was so slippery, that he could fasten nothing upon it which he read. The old hermit (for so as I remember he was described) bid him take an earthen pitcher, and fill it with water; when he had done it, he bid him empty it again, and wipe it clean, that nothing should remain in it; which when the other had done, and wondered to what this tended, 'Now,' saith he, 'though there be nothing of the water remaining in it, yet the pitcher is cleaner than it was before: so, though thy memory retain nothing of the word thou readeest, yet thy heart is the cleaner for its very passage through.'

Affection to the truths which we read or hear, makes the memory retentive of them. Most men's memories are like jet, or electrical bodies, that attract and hold fast only straws or feathers, or such vain and light things. Discourse to them of the affairs of the world, or some idle and romantic story, their memories retain this as faithfully as if it were engraven on leaves of brass; whereas the great and important truths of the Gospel, the great mysteries of heaven and concerns of eternity, leave no more impression upon them, than words on the air in which they are spoken. Whence is this, but only that the one sort work themselves into the memory through the interest they have got in the affections, which the other cannot do? Had we but the same delight in heavenly objects, did we but receive the truth in the love of it, and mingle it with faith in the hearing, this would fix that volatileness and flittiness of our memories, and make every truth as indelible as it is necessary.

BP. HOPKINS.

*To be wary in our walk with God, the soul must daily take account of itself.*

THAT conscience alone is good which is much busied in this work, in demanding and answering, which speaks much with itself, and much with God. This is both the sign that it is good, and the means to make it better. That soul will doubtless be very wary in its walk, which takes daily account of itself, and renders up that account unto God. It will not live by guess, but naturally examine each step beforehand, because it is resolved to examine all after; will consider well what it should do, because it means to ask over again what it hath done, and not only to answer itself, but to make a faithful report of all unto God; to lay all before him continually, upon trial made; to tell him what is in any measure well done, as his own work, and bless him for that; and tell him, too, all the slips and miscarriages of the day, as our own; complaining of ourselves in his presence, and still entreating free pardon, and more wisdom to walk more holily and exactly, and gaining, even by our failings, more humility and more watchfulness. If you would have your consciences answer well, they must inquire and question much beforehand. Whether is this I purpose and go about, agreeable to my Lord's will? Will it please him? Ask that more, and regard that more, than this, which the most follow. Will it please or profit myself? Fits that my own humour? And examine not only the bulk and substance of thy ways and actions, but the manner of them, how thy heart is set. So, think it not enough to go to church, or to pray, but *take heed how ye hear*; for, consider how pure he is, and how piercing his eye, whom thou serveest.

LEIGHTON.



## PART III.—EXPERIMENTAL.

### SECTION I.—SOME CONSIDERATIONS SUITED TO VARIOUS CASES OF DISCOURAGEMENT.

*Those who are Discouraged under a deep sense of internal Depravity, or prevalence of Sin in the Heart.*

A DEEP sense of internal depravity, or the prevalence of sin in the heart, has often been very stumbling to serious Christians, who, on a view of their vileness, have been ready to conclude their cases are both singular and sad: says the discouraged soul, if I be a Christian, why am I thus?

It may be an advantage for such to reflect, that a soul-humbling sense of sin, and deep abasement before God, has been experienced by the most eminent saints recorded in Scripture, as is evident from the language they have used on the subject of self-description, saying, *Behold, I am vile, I abhor myself. I am undone. I am a man of unclean lips. I blush to look up to heaven: I am as a beast before thee. Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. In me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. I am carnal, and sold under sin. I find a law in my members warring against the law in my mind, leading me into captivity. Iniquities prevail against me. Evil is present with me. I cannot do the things that I would. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me? We are all as an unclean thing.* These, with many more instances which might be produced, demonstrate, that true believers, and they only, are properly acquainted with the plague of their own hearts. Why then should the Christian be discouraged through feeling himself to be, what those who were eminent for godliness have with shame and sorrow acknowledged they were? Besides, have you not repeatedly treated the Lord to search and try you, discover what was in your hearts? And all you now be stumbled and discour-

raged because he has heard and answered your prayers? And as God has given you an experience, similar to what was once the case of those who are now the subjects of spotless purity and perpetual praise, is it reasonable to conclude from thence that you are not the subjects of a gracious change? You may rather infer, that if the Lord had been pleased to have slain you, he would not have shewn you such things as these. Remember, *the whole need not a physician, but those that are sick*; and grace has made rich provision for healing all the diseases and maladies of the mind. Perhaps every good man will at least account himself, of all others, the most indebted to God and grace; for he feels that in himself which he does not certainly know is in any other, for every heart only knows its own bitterness. By such experiences, the Lord is training his people for the future glory. For, accounting themselves, as St. Paul did, *the chief of sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15, their own salvation will be the matter of eternal wonder, every one viewing his own deliverance as the effect of a peculiar exertion of Divine power, and an uncommon display of rich superabounding grace; being each under infinite deficiency, respecting their personal endeavours to extol the great Jehovah. Mutual assistance will be entreated in the work of praise; for the language of the redeemed of the Lord to fellow-saints frequently is, *O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together*, Psalm xxxiv. 3. Go on, then, ye blessed of the Lord, pressing after the full possession of that salvation which you see the absolute need of, even a complete deliverance from sin, as well as from sorrow; that grace which has rendered sin loathsome, and Christ lovely in your view, is sufficient for you; in a perpetual dependence on which, may you hold on your way with courage and caution, till you ar-

rive at Zion's celestial gate! *Then shall you obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away*; Isaiah xxxiv. 10.  
REV. ROB. HALL.

It becomes us to be humbled into the dust with a sense of indwelling sin; yet our grief, though it cannot be too great, may be under a wrong direction; and if it leads us into impatience or distrust, it certainly is so. Sin is the sickness of the soul, in itself mortal and incurable, as to any power in heaven or earth, but that of the Lord Jesus only. But he is the great, the infallible Physician. Have we the privilege to know his name? Have we been enabled to put ourselves into his hand? We have then no more to do but to attend his prescriptions, to be satisfied with his methods, and to wait his time. It is lawful to wish we were well; it is natural to groan, being burdened; but still he must and will take his own course with us; and however dissatisfied with ourselves, we ought still to be thankful that he has begun his work in us, and to believe that he will also make an end. Therefore, while we mourn, we should likewise rejoice; we should encourage ourselves to expect all that he has promised; and we should limit our expectations by his promises. We are sure that when the Lord delivers us from the guilt and dominion of sin, he could with equal ease free us entirely from sin, if he pleased. The doctrine of sinless perfection is not to be rejected as though it were a thing simply impossible in itself, for nothing is too hard for the Lord; but because it is contrary to that method by which he has chosen to proceed. He has appointed that sanctification should be effected, and sin mortified, not at once completely, but by little and little; and doubtless he has wise reasons for it. Therefore, though we are to desire a growth in grace, we should, at the same time, acquiesce in his appointment, and not despond or be discouraged because we feel that conflict which his word informs us will only terminate with our lives.

Some of the first prayers which the Spirit of God teaches us to put up, are for a clearer sense of the sinfulness of sin, and our vileness on account of it. Now, if the Lord be pleased to answer our prayers in this respect, though it will afford cause enough for humiliation, yet it should be received likewise with thankful-

ness, as a token for good. The heart is not worse than formerly, only our spiritual knowledge is increased; and this is no small part of the growth in grace for which we are thirsting, to be truly humbled, and emptied, and made little in our own eyes. It is by the experiences of evil within ourselves, and by feeling our utter insufficiency, either to perform duty or to withstand our enemies, that the Lord takes occasion to show us the suitableness, the sufficiency, the freeness, the unchangeableness, of his power and grace. Let us then be thankful and cheerful; and while we take shame to ourselves, let us glorify God by giving Jesus the honour due to his name. Though we are poor, he is rich; though we are weak, he is strong; though we have nothing, he possesses all things. He suffered for us; he calls us to be conformed to him in sufferings. He conquered in his own person, and he will make each of his members *more than conquerors* in due season. It is good to have not only our eye upon ourselves, but it should also be ever fixed on him, in whom we have righteousness, peace, and power. He can controul all that we fear; so that if our path should be through the fire or through the water, neither the flood should drown, nor the flame kindle upon us; and ere long, he will cut short our conflicts, and say, *Come up hither*. Having such promises and assurances, let us lift up our banner in his name, and press on through every discouragement.

REV. JOHN NEWTON.

We teach and comfort the afflicted sinner after this manner: Brother, it is not possible for thee to become so righteous in this life, that thou shouldst feel no sin at all, that thy body should be clear like the sun, without spot or blemish; but thou hast as yet wrinkles and spots, and yet art thou holy notwithstanding. But thou wilt say, How can I be holy, when I have and feel sin in me? I answer, In that thou dost feel and acknowledge thy sin, it is a good token; give thanks unto God, and despair not. It is one step of health when the sick man doth acknowledge and confess his infirmity. But how shall I be delivered from sin? Run to Christ the Physician, which healeth them that are broken in heart, and saveth sinners. Follow not the judgment of reason, which telleth thee, that he is angry with sinners;

but kill reason, and believe in Christ. If thou believe, thou art righteous, because thou givest glory unto God; that he is almighty, merciful, true, &c.; thou justifiest and praisest God. To be brief, thou yieldest unto him his divinity, and whatsoever else belongeth unto him; and the sin which remaineth in thee is not laid to thy charge, but is pardoned for Christ's sake in whom thou believest, who is perfectly just; whose righteousness is thy righteousness, and thy sin is his sin.

LUTHER.

*Those who fear their Sins are too great to be forgiven.*

PARDONING grace can as easily triumph in the remitting of great and many sins, as of few and small sins. What a great blot upon the heavens is a thick cloud! and yet the beams of the sun can pierce through that, and scatter it easily. Why, now, God will blot out our transgressions as a thick cloud; so himself tells us by the prophet, Isa. xlv. 12, *I will blot out thy transgressions as a cloud, and thine iniquities as a thick cloud.* A great debt may as easily be blotted out as a small one. Ten thousand talents is a great sum, yet it is as easily and freely forgiven by the great God, as a few pence. God proclaims himself to be a God pardoning iniquity, transgression, and sin; that is, sins of all sorts and sizes. The greatest sins repented of, are no more without the extent of Divine grace and mercy, than the least sins unrepented of, are without the cognisance of Divine justice. *Though your sins be as scarlet, yet shall they become as white as snow; though they be red as crimson, yet they shall be as wool,* Isaiah i. 18. And can there then be found a despairing soul in the world, when the great God hath thus magnified his grace and mercy above all his works—yea, and above all ours also? Say not then, O sinner, *My sins are greater than can be forgiven*; this is to stint and limit the grace of God, which he hath made boundless and infinite: and thou mayest with as much truth and reason say, thou art greater than God, as that thy sins are greater than his mercy. Of all things in the world, take heed that you be not injurious to rich grace, and to this free love and mercy, that pardons thee even for his own sake. God pardons thee for himself, or his own sake: and dost thou fear, O

penitent and believing soul, that ever he will condemn thee for thy sins? No, but as much as God and his mercy is greater than our sins, so much more reason will he find in himself to pardon the repenting believing sinner, than he can find reason in his sins to condemn him.

BR. HOPKINS.

The first observation that I would recommend to the notice of the distressed sinner, who is bowed down under an apprehension that his transgressions are too many, and too heinous to be forgiven, is the consideration of the nature and design of the blessed Gospel of Christ: I mean, that it is a system of pure grace and mercy, and altogether intended for the very character the poor self-condemned sinner finds himself to be. Nay, so very peculiarly directed to the sinner, and to him only, is the blessed Gospel of the Lord Jesus, that unless you are a sinner, you are not interested in its saving truths. For the great Author of it himself declared, that he came not to call the *righteous*, but *sinners to repentance*. And agreeably to this, in the Redeemer's first sermon which he preached in the synagogue at the opening of his commission, he proclaimed this, and this only, to be the grand object for which he was appointed; *to preach the Gospel to the poor; to heal the broken-hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised; and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* Examine those characters one by one, and see whether they do not exactly come up to your case and circumstances. If the Gospel be to be preached to the poor, can any be more poor, more wretched, more deplorable in spirit than you? If Jesus be commissioned to heal the broken-hearted, is there one more broken-hearted than you? And if a state of sin and despair be represented under the image of a captive, bound and unable to come forth of himself from the prison, and Jesus declares that he came to preach deliverance to such a poor creature; will you not instantly cry out, Lord, I am he? Who can have been more blinded by sin than you? Or who more bruised in all the faculties of the soul? When Jesus, therefore, expressly declares, that the very object of his coming from above, was for the recovering of sight

*to the blind, and for the setting at liberty them that are bruised*; if your situation doth not correspond to the design of his commission, it is impossible to find a case that doth. The whole world is in a state of guilt and condemnation before God. And though some, from the pride and vanity of their own heart, may fancy themselves less so than others, yet if all the causes which prevent sin in one from being so great as in another, were taken away, it would be found that all are more upon a level than is supposed in this particular. So that strictly and properly speaking, there are but two different characters of sinners to be found among men. I mean such as are awakened to a sense of sin, and such as are not. As for the unawakened, they know not their corruptions before God, therefore they seek not for a cleansing from them; they are ignorant of what Christ is to the soul, and therefore his precious blood and righteousness is but little esteemed by them. And such a state of hardness, unconcern, and impenitency, if continued in to the end of life, deprives them of being partakers of the blessings of redemption. *If ye believe not* (says Christ) *that I am He, ye shall die in your sins*, John viii. 24. Hence, therefore, there is but one class of sinners more upon earth, and that is the class, my brother, to which you belong. The awakened, the convinced, the humble sinner; he particularly who is so convinced, so humbled, so broken-hearted, as to fear that he hath sinned beyond the power of redemption. And if such do not come within the promises of the Gospel, all the promises would then be vain. Then the precious blood of Christ would have been shed in vain: and after all the many gracious and exceeding great and precious promises, then would our faith be also vain, and every son and daughter of Adam would be yet in their sins. So that the very nature and design of the Gospel evidently proves for whom it is intended: and a plainer and more obvious truth cannot be found, that you are among the very persons to whom the word of this salvation is sent, than in those features of the mind which distinguish your character. \*

DR. HAWKER.

We see what sort of people Jesus invites to come to him, in order to make them partakers of the grace and gifts which he

received for them; persons in every respect miserable, and destitute of all hope of salvation. But we are also informed, that we cannot enjoy the blessings which Jesus Christ brings us, unless, being humbled under a real sense of our misery, we come to him as poor hungry souls, who seek him as our Deliverer. For such as are puffed up with pride, and neither groan under their captivity, nor seem dissatisfied with their blindness, have no ears to hear the Gospel, and despise it.

If we do but recollect that Jesus Christ came into this world to make us happy, and that for this cause he clothed himself with our flesh, shed his blood, finished the sacrifice of himself by his death, and descended into hell; we shall not think it strange, that he chooses to save such as are the vilest of the human race, and plunged into an abyss of wickedness. We may suppose, that a person whom we may look on with detestation, is unworthy of the grace of Christ. Why then was Jesus Christ himself made a curse, unless to stretch out his hand to poor and accursed sinners? CALVIN.

Come to him, ye sinners, whoever ye are, *though your sins be as scarlet*, though your iniquities be of the blackest die; come, and he will pardon you. Tell me not of your age, your condition, your manners, or your nation; this *Lamb taketh away the sin of the world*. Are you of the human race, be you what you may in other respects, Gentile or Jew, Greek or Barbarian, bond or free, male or female, he will take away your sins. Fear not that they should exceed the power of his blood. This blood has a divine and infinite efficacy; it is the blood of the Lamb of God, *who is over all, God blessed for ever*; this blood will take away all your spots, however black and deep they may be. It will cleanse you from all your filthiness; it will purify you, and make you as white as snow, though your sins be as scarlet. Do not deceive yourselves with works and human inventions. You have the Lamb of God in the midst of you, the source of grace, the fountain of salvation. To whom will you go but to him? He *only hath the words of eternal life*. All those who keep at a distance from him shall perish; and all who forsake him shall be cut off. But as for us, it is our privilege to draw near to him. He hath all

things in abundance which are necessary for our happiness.

He became a Lamb for us; let us in truth become his sheep. He shed all his blood for our salvation; can we then be so ungrateful as to refuse him a few drops of ours, or, what is still much less, a few crumbs of bread, or a mite or two from our treasure, which he asks of us for his glory, and for the relief of our necessitous brethren? Ah! may he himself, by the power of his blood and Spirit, enable us to walk in all his commandments!

J. DAILLE.

Jesus has shed streams of blood, that grace might flow abundantly on us. Thou hast nothing now, O poor sinner, to fear, as soon as thou truly believest in Jesus Christ; go boldly to the throne of God, since Jesus died for thee. His blood washes away thy sins; his stripes heal thy diseases; his nails and thorns destroy the handwriting that was against thee; his nakedness arrays thee in fine linen, clean and white, even the righteousness of saints; his accusation by false witnesses secures thee from the just accusations of thy conscience; his condemnation before Pilate, is thy absolution before God, and thou mayest now cry out in full assurance, *Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died*, and who by his death hath obtained eternal redemption for us. Nothing, I say nothing can any longer condemn us, since our Saviour hath died for us; if we embrace him with true faith, we have nothing more to fear. For what should we fear? Is it sin, of which we are conscious? But Jesus having been delivered for our offences, our sins are no longer ours, but his who took them upon himself, and bare them; they are pardoned crimes, iniquities that are blotted out, debts that are paid, which God, the Sovereign Creditor, has erased from his book, with a view neither to trouble us on their account, nor to make any further demands upon us.

Du Bosc.

### *Those who despair of Mercy.*

THERE cannot be an act more opposite to faith than to fear distrustfully, to despair in fearing: none more injurious either to God or our own souls: for surely, as Cyril well says, 'The wickedness of our offences to God cannot exceed his goodness toward us:' the praise whereof from

his creature he affects and esteems so highly, as if he cared not, in any other notion, to be apprehended by us; proclaiming himself no otherwise in the mount, than, *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin*; adding only one word, to prevent our too much presumption, *that will by no means clear the guilty*, Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7: which to do, were a mere contradiction to his justice. Of all other, therefore, God hates most to be robbed of this part of his glory. Neither is the wrong done to God more palpable, than that which is done herein unto ourselves, in barring the gates of heaven upon our souls, in breaking open the gates of hell to take them in, and, in the mean time, striving to make ourselves miserable, whether God will or no. And, surely, as our experience tells us concerning the estate of our bodily indispositions, that there is more frequent sickness in summer, but more deadly in winter, so we find it here: other sins and spiritual distempers are more common, but this distrustful fear and despair of mercy, which chills the soul with a cold horror, is more mortal.

For the remedy whereof, it is requisite that the heart should be thoroughly convinced of the superabundant and ever-ready mercy of the Almighty; of the infallible and unfailing truth of all his gracious engagements; and, in respect of both, be made to confess, that heaven can never be but open to the penitent. It is a sweet word and a true one of St. Bernard, 'In thy book, O Lord, are written all that do what they can, though they cannot do what they ought.' Neither doth God admit only, but he invites, but he entreats, but he importunes men to be saved. What could he do more, unless he would offer violence to the will, which were no other than to destroy it, and so to undo the best piece of his own workmanship? It is the way of his decree and proceedings to dispose of all things sweetly; neither is it more against our nature, than his, to force his own ends; and when he sees that fair means will not prevail to win us from death, he is pleased feelingly to bemoan it, as his own loss: *Why will ye die, O house of Israel?* As for the stable truth of his promises, it is so everlasting, that heaven and earth, in their vanishing,

shall leave it standing fast: his title is, *Amen*; and, *Faithful is he that hath promised, who will also do it*. His very essence can no more fail, than his word. He who fears, therefore, that God will be less than his promise, let him fear that God will cease to be himself. It was the motto of the wise and learned Doctor Donne, the late dean of St. Paul's, which I have seen more than once, written in Spanish with his own hand, 'Blessed be God, that he is God': divinely, like himself: as the being of God is the ground of all his blessed ascriptions, so of all our firmitude, safety, consolation; since the veracity and truth of God, as his other holy attributes, are no other than his eternal essence. Fear not, therefore, O thou weak soul, that the Almighty can be wanting to himself in failing thee. He is Jehovah, and his counsels shall stand. Fear and blame thine own wretched infirmities. But the more weak thou art in thyself, be so much the stronger in thy God: by how much more thou art tempted to distrust, cling so much the closer to the Author and Finisher of thy salvation.

BP. HALL.

It is not thy having lain long under sin, or long under terrors and despairs; it is not thy having sinned often under many enlightenings, that can hinder thee from being saved by Christ. Do but remember this same word, *To the uttermost*, and then put in what exception thou wilt or canst.

REV. IS. AMBROSE.

God condescends to receive us after we have tried every thing else, and after every thing else has failed us, and though he knows we should not have returned to him, if every thing had not failed us.

MRS. H. MORE.

All that his saving grace falls on, are lost and undone sinners, men at the very brink of hell. Who could be lower, viler, and baser, except they that be in hell itself, than the Ephesians, as recorded in chap. ii. 1—3; and yet in such a case and condition, grace made its first visit to them. The Apostle Peter encouraged such men to come to the throne of grace, who, if ever any in the world should have been kept back, it should have been they; a crew of the murderers of the Son of God, for they had slain the heir and foundation of all the promises; they had done as

much as men could do to forfeit all interest in the promise, and yet Peter still invites them to the throne of grace, by an interest yet in the promise.

REV. R. TRAILL.

In these lists of detestable criminals, (1 Cor. vi. 9—11,) we perceive sinners of every class: some that were monsters in wickedness, who consequently could have no moral worth to plead as a ground of forgiveness, and yet their filthy souls were washed in the atoning blood of Christ—were justified by his righteousness—sanctified by his Spirit, and made meet for the enjoyment of Heaven. Surely such striking instances of the aboundings of grace over the aboundings of sin, must constrain us to acknowledge that Christ is able and willing to save to the uttermost.

AUTHOR OF THE REFUGE.

Whatever view we take of the character of Christ, we see love to man exemplified in every action, and in every conversation of his life. He was born, he lived, he died for sinners. And whatever sin may suggest to the contrary, whatever our corrupt nature may plead in opposition, whatever doubts unbelief may raise against it, whatever the enemy of souls may craftily insinuate to deter us from accepting the mercy of God in Christ Jesus; this *great salvation*, is offered to sinners, and this merciful Saviour may be their Saviour.

REV. H. DAVY.

*Those who are discouraged on account of their relapses into Sin or general backslidings.*

Christ is able to save those who have frequently relapsed into the commission of the same sin. This is that, I know, which galls and stings the consciences of many sinners; it is not so much the multitude of their sins that affright them, as the frequent commission of the same sins. Oh! saith one, I am guilty of reiterated and oft-repeated sins, I have committed the same sin again and again, notwithstanding I have been convinced of it, notwithstanding I have prayed, resolved, and vowed against it, notwithstanding all the convictions and overtures I have had; and notwithstanding all the resolutions I have made, I have again relapsed into the same sins, and those not of ordinary infirmity and human frailty, but sins of gross and scandalous nature; and are such sins pardonable?

I answer, They are. These relapses, although they are very dangerous, yet they are not altogether incurable. It is hard to soften a heart that is treacherous to God and to itself, and very deeply engaged in some particular lust, when we are frequently overcome by the same corruption, by the same temptation, but yet this is not such an aggravation as should leave our sins unpardonable, or us desperate. The Jews, indeed, have a tradition among them, that the fourth relapse into the same sin makes it an unpardonable offence, but we know the mercy of God, and the infinite merit of Christ, are not stinted by any number of sins, nor by any number of the same sins. Certainly, that Christ who bids us to forgive our brother, though he should offend us to *seventy times seven* offences, and hath not excepted reiterated provocations, will, upon our repentance, so much oftener forgive us, as his great mercy is above our charity. Though we have committed those sins and provocations against himself, though it be matter of bitter and deep humiliation that any corruption should be so prevalent as frequently to overcome us, and notwithstanding conviction, contrition, and heart-breaking confession, yet it is no cause of despair of mercy, yet the grace of Christ can subdue such rooted sinners as these. And what sins soever the grace of Christ can subdue, the mercy of God can pardon.

Christ *can* save the profoundest and most notorious backslider. And it is the greatest obstruction to a sinner's hope; this is that which fills him with fears and terrors. Oh! I have been so guilty of apostacy, I have tasted of the sweetness of the heavenly gift, and of the powers of the world to come, yet I have fallen back to my carnal temper from the holy ways of God, and have again backslided and wallowed in my former pollutions, from which I seemed sometimes to be cleansed and refined:—and is this apostacy pardonable?

I answer, there is indeed an unpardonable apostacy, described in that dreadful place, Heb. vi. 4.<sup>th</sup> It is impossible for such a one to be renewed by repentance, &c. This is the same with *the sin against the Holy Ghost*; and this no man is guilty of but he that hath cast off all means tending to salvation and eternal life, and all desires after it. There is also an apostacy from great attainments both of gifts

and graces. When a man's zeal to God's glory cools, when his vigour in holy duties faints, when his relish to spiritual objects vitiates, and he returns to a lukewarm and indifferent temper, and it may be to a sinful and wicked life; this, though it be very sad and dreadful, yet the man is both pardonable and recoverable. See that most comfortable place, Jer. iii. 22. *Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold we come unto thee, for thou art the Lord our God.*

I shall not instance in any other aggravations which makes sin out of measure sinful, and makes the sinner out of measure dangerous, since, if the relapsing, if the apostatizing sinner be pardonable and saveable, there is none then have reason to exclude themselves from the hopes of eternal life. Indeed the only danger is, lest the wickedness of men abuse this most comfortable doctrine, and turn that into presumption, which is only intended to arm them against despair. Indeed, both presumption and despair do tend in divers manners to engage and harden men in sin. The despairing person judgeth—if I must not be saved, if my sins are such as that there is no pardon for them, to what purpose do I then live strictly, and vex, and cross myself, and perplex my life? I will let loose the reins, and enjoy myself, and reap as great a crop as I can of pleasure, and if I must to hell, I will make the way as delightful as I can. And the argument on the other side, that encourageth and hardeneth the presumptuous sinner is this, Christ is able to save to the uttermost the vilest sinners; we hear no sins are beyond his all-sufficiency to save, therefore, say they, what need we trouble ourselves to repent and reform, we will yet a while indulge ourselves in sin, for the efficacy of Christ is able to save in the last moment of our lives, as after many years' preparations. We see iniquity every where fearfully abounding; and though we use to say Despair kills its thousands, and Presumption its ten thousands, yet if we narrowly consider, possibly it may be found that this kind of despair in men, arising from sloth and carelessness, is as great a source of impiety as presumption. Whence else is it that many who are convinced, and their consciences blackened with the sense of wrath, persist still to add iniquity to iniquity, but because they think that there is no salvation for them, that their

doom is fixed, and that their state is determined; and therefore since they must pay so dear as eternal damnation, they are resolved to make up their pennyworths in their present pleasures of sin, like those in Jer. xviii. 12: *And they said, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart?* I should judge it one of the most conducive means to promote men's endeavours after godliness, if I could but bring them to a serious and settled belief that their salvation is attainable; for certainly so good a thing as salvation is, it cannot but stir up affections and industry proportionable to our apprehensions of the valuableness of it. Hence then to tell men what great sins Christ can pardon, what great sinners he can save is no encouragement to presumption, but rather to the exercise of holiness; for since the way to heaven is cleared from impossibilities, it is most unreasonable for men to stick at difficulties; but if any abuse this doctrine of *Christ's all-sufficiency to save the greatest sinners*, to sloth, and the support of their wickedness, promising themselves peace and happiness in the end, though they go on in sin presumptuously, adding iniquity to iniquity, let me only tell them (and it will be enough to damp all their vain hopes) that though Christ be able to save to the uttermost, yet he is not able to save them in their sins, but only from their sins. **BP. HOPKINS.**

*Those who fear to apply to Christ from a sense of unworthiness.*

If you make a diligent search through all the Scripture, you will not find one word that speaks out God's requiring any worthiness in the creature before the soul's believing in Christ; before the soul's leaning and resting upon Christ for happiness and blessedness; and why then should that be a bar or hinderance to your faith, which God does no where require of you before you come to Christ, *that you may have life?* Satan objects your unworthiness against you, only out of a design to keep Christ and your souls asunder for ever; and therefore in the face of all your unworthiness, rest upon Christ, come to Christ, believe in Christ; and you are happy for ever.

Consider that none ever received Christ, embraced Christ, and obtained mercy and pardon from Christ, but unworthy souls.

What worthiness was in Matthew, Zachæus, Mary Magdalene, Manassch, Paul, and Lydia, before their coming to Christ, before their faith in Christ? Surely none. Christ has bestowed the choicest mercies, the greatest favours, the highest dignities, the sweetest privileges, upon unworthy sinners; and therefore do not faint, do not despair; but patiently and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord. Who can tell but that free grace and mercy may shine forth upon us, though we are unworthy, and give us a portion among those worthies that are now triumphing in heaven.

If the soul will keep off from Christ till it be worthy, it will never close with Christ; it will never embrace Christ; it will never be *one with Christ*; it must lie down in everlasting sorrow. God has laid up all worthiness in Christ, that the creature may know where to find it, and may make out after it. There is no way on earth to make unworthy souls worthy, but by believing in Christ. Believing in Christ, of slaves, will make you worthy sons; of enemies, it will make you worthy friends. God will count none worthy but believers, who are made worthy by the worthiness of Christ's person, righteousness, satisfaction, and intercession.

If you make a diligent search into your own hearts, you will find that it is the pride and folly of your own hearts, that put you upon bringing a worthiness to Christ. You would fain bring something to Christ that might render you acceptable to him; you are loath to come empty-handed. The Lord cries, *Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not?* Isa. lv. 1, 2. Here the Lord calls upon moneyless, upon unworthy souls, to come and partake of his precious favours freely; but sinners are proud and foolish, and because they have no money, no worthiness to bring, they will not come, though he sweetly invites them.

**REV. T. BROOKES.**

There are some that are specially welcome to Christ, and speed well at this throne of grace. As,

They that come when they can do no-



thing else ; they that come to the throne of grace as their last shift : *We know not what to do, but our eyes are upon thee*, said Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 12. Sincerest believing, and strongest believing, is acted, when a man hath no prop at all to lean upon, but God alone. Believing is called *fleeing* : *We have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before us*, Heb. vi. 18. Now, who flees ? Only he that can stand no longer, that is not able to deal with his adversary and danger, that hath no hope of prevailing by his strength, and therefore betakes himself to his heels. It is men's great sin to endeavour to seek that elsewhere, that only is to be found here, mercy and grace : but it is the greatest sin of all, to count all lost, as long as this throne stands, and the Lord calls men to come to it. Be deeply humbled, and covered with shame ; yet come notwithstanding. Such is the corruption of our hearts, and the Lord seeth it well, that if sinners could find grace and mercy any where else, they would never come to the throne of grace for it. Christ is the last shift of a distressed sinner ; yet, blessed be his name, he welcomes the comer. The woman, Mark v. 25-35, tries many means ere she comes to Christ, yet sped well when she came at last. REV. R. TRAILL.

When God is pleased to call some to his church, and to the enjoyment of salvation, in preference to others, we are by no means to infer, that he saw in them a better disposition and preparation for grace ; that they had made a better use of the light they had, and of their natural faculties ; or that they had led a more virtuous and moral life, by which God was moved to impart unto them the supernatural graces, and the divine, saving light of faith. Oh no ! His gracious call finds us neither disposed, nor prepared to receive it. On the contrary, it finds us in a wretched condition, with our understandings darkened, our wills deplorably perverted, our affections dreadfully confused, and all the faculties of our souls abominably corrupted and depraved. When God, therefore, turns to us in love, and betrothes us unto himself for ever, in loving-kindness and in mercies ; it is not on account of any excellence, which he perceives in our persons. Thus you see in the most distinguished calls of God, recorded in the holy Scriptures, that he has

been pleased to call men who were in the most wretched situation possible.

What was Abraham, when God called him to be the father of all the faithful, and the root of the lineage from which the Saviour of the world descended ? He was, probably, an idolater, plunged in the abominations of his fathers. Josh. xxiv. 2.

What was St. Matthew, when Jesus Christ called him and conferred his grace on him ? He was a publican, an extortioner, a public servant of the system of tyranny and oppression. He was just then engaged in the performance of this odious profession, sitting at the receipt of custom, in his iniquitous office, when Jesus favoured him with one of those gracious looks, which instantly conveyed holiness into the heart.

What was Mary Magdalene, when Jesus converted her ? She was possessed of seven devils, a habitation of unclean spirits, a living hell.

What was St. Paul, when Jesus spoke to him in his way to Damascus ? He was a roaring lion, a furious wild boar, a ravenous tiger, thirsting after the blood of believers, and breathing out threatenings and slaughter ; he was in the very act of destroying the church of Christ, he was hastening to massacre, with a heart filled with rage, a mouth full of blasphemies, provided with chains and instruments of death. At that very time, and under those dreadful circumstances, Christ made him sensible of his call, and took him as a chosen vessel unto himself. Du Bosq.

*Those who are discouraged from applying to Christ, till proof of an interest in him appear.*

It is frequently asserted, that a true faith in Christ is inseparably connected with the knowledge of an interest in him, or that there can be no proper believing in Jesus without considering him as a person's own : this has proved a stumbling-block to many ; for as common sense suggests the absolute necessity of *evidence*, in order to support a *claim*, and the soul before it goes to Christ, not having that evidence, therefore is discouraged from applying to him, till *proof* of an interest in him appear. Labouring in vain for marks and signs, as evidences of their belonging to Christ, in order to warrant or encourage their application to him, they conclude there is no hope, they are none of his chosen

and redeemed, &c. But there is no doctrine contained in the Gospel, nor even any threatening in the law of God, which is in its own nature a bar to an undone sinner's coming to Christ for salvation. Their right to come to Christ does not in the least depend upon, or arise from, a *prior* knowledge of *interest* in special blessings, or *feeling* themselves the subjects of supernatural principles. Such knowledge, such experience, is impossible to be obtained, but in consequence of believing in or receiving Jesus the Saviour; for *he who believeth not* is declaratively under condemnation, *the wrath of God abideth on him*. To attempt, therefore, to define, as some do, who ought and who ought not to return to God by Christ, is daring presumption, and tends to discourage, and rivet the fetters of guilt, where a sense of meanness and misery prevails, and encourages self-righteousness, by establishing the idea of previous fitness in order to salvation.

If any one should ask, Have I a right to apply to Jesus the Saviour, simply as a poor, undone, perishing sinner, in whom there appears no good thing? I answer, Yes; the Gospel proclamation is, *Whosoever will, let him come*, Rev. xxii. 17. *To you, O men, I call, and my voice is to the sons of men*, Prov. viii. 4. The way to Jesus is graciously laid open for every one who chooses to come to him. His arms of mercy are expanded to receive the coming soul. Fear not, poor sinner, to approach him; he will not, on any account, cast thee out, John vi. 37. He does not receive with reluctance; no, it is his joy, it is his delight to *save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him*. Consider, the painful work of salvation is now with him for ever over. His endearing invitations to poor heavy-laden sinners, his melting expostulations with them, and gracious reception of them, are left on record, as the warrant, and for the encouragement, of sinners; therefore, the worst of such, even the vilest of the vile, may come and apply to him for salvation from sin and sorrow. However remote you are, however great the distance from him, he kindly invites you to view him as the Almighty Saviour; saying, *Behold me! Behold me!* Isa. lxxv. 1. *Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved, for I am God, and there is none else*, Isa. xlii. 22. The gracious grant is indefinite, the way to Jesus is open and free for *whosoever will*, without exception; nothing

that God has done, or said, is in its nature an obstacle. None can in truth say they desire salvation, but may not apply for it, or cannot attain it. To infer that personal unworthiness, or any Scriptural doctrine, is a bar in their way to Jesus, is either the effect of strong temptations, or owing to the want of attention to the grace of God, displayed in the Gospel. There is no preventive bar in the sinner's way to the Saviour, but what ariseth from a carnal heart; such as, impenitency for sin, an attachment to self-righteousness, and an avowed aversion to the holy perfections of God, and his sovereign methods of grace. But let it be observed, that a *grant* to come to Christ does not support a *claim*, or give a right to conclude they shall be saved by him. No, such a conclusion is only inferrible from our having really believed in his name; a right to go to Christ is no proof we have done so. What *evidences* a person's being a true believer, is quite distinct from what *warrants* his applying to the Saviour: the latter arises from what God in his word *says* to him; the former appears from the change which is *wrought* in him. To put persons, therefore, upon examining themselves, whether they have faith, before they believe, is extremely injudicious; and to encourage professors in the persuasion they are believers, without Scripture evidence of an internal change, is awfully dangerous.

REV. ROB. HALL.

*Those who are discouraged in coming to God from want of good works.*

LET us bear this well in mind in our private temptations, when the devil accuseth and terrifieth our conscience to drive it to desperation. For he is the father of lying, and the enemy of Christian liberty; therefore he tormenteth us every moment with false fears, that when our conscience hath lost Christian liberty, it should feel the remorse of sin and condemnation, and always remain in anguish and terror. When that great dragon, I say, that old serpent the devil (*who deceiveth the whole world, and accuseth our brethren in the presence of God day and night*, Rev. xii. 9, 10.) cometh and layeth unto thy charge, that thou hast not only done no good, but hast also transgressed the law of God, say unto him, Thou troublest me with the remembrance of my sins past. Thou puttest me also in mind that I have

done no good. But this is nothing to me : for if either I trusted in mine own good deeds, or distrusted because I have done none, Christ should both ways profit me nothing at all. Therefore, whether thou lay my sins before me, or my good works, I pass not : but removing both far out of my sight, I only rest in that liberty wherein Christ hath made me free ; I know him to be profitable unto me, therefore I will not make him unprofitable : which I should do, if either I should presume to purchase myself favour and everlasting life by my good deeds, or should despair of my salvation because of my sins.

Wherefore let us learn with all diligence to separate Christ far from all works, as well good as evil ; from all laws both of God and man, and from all troubled consciences ; for with all these Christ hath nothing to do. He hath to do, I grant, with afflicted consciences : howbeit not to afflict them more, but to raise them up, and in their affliction to comfort them. Therefore if Christ appear in the likeness of an angry judge, or of a lawgiver that requireth a strait account of our life past ; then let us assure ourselves that it is not Christ, but a raging fiend. For the Scripture painteth out Christ to be our reconciliation, our advocate, and our comforter. Such a one he is and ever shall be : he cannot be unlike himself.

Therefore, whensoever the devil, transforming himself into the likeness of Christ, disputeth with us after this manner, This thou oughtest, being admonished by my word, to have done, and hast not done it ; and this thou oughtest not to have done, and hast done it ; know thou therefore that I will take on thee, &c. ;—let this nothing at all move us, but by and by let us think with ourselves,—Christ speaketh not to poor afflicted and despairing consciences after this manner ; he addeth not affliction to the afflicted ; he *breaketh not the bruised reed, neither quencheth he the smoking flax*, Isa. xlii. 3. Indeed, to the hard-hearted he speaketh sharply ; but such as are terrified and afflicted, he most lovingly and comfortably allureth unto him, saying, *Come unto me all ye that travail and be heavy laden, and I will refresh you*, Matt. xi. 28. *I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*, Matt. ix. 13. *Be of good comfort, my son ; thy sins are forgiven thee*, Matt. ix. 2. *Be not afraid ; I have overcome*

*the world*, John xvi. 33. *The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost*, Luke xix. 10. We must take good heed, therefore, lest that we, being deceived with the wonderful sleights and infinite subtilties of Satan, do receive an accuser and condemner in the stead of a comforter and saviour ; and so under the visor of a false Christ, that is to say, of the devil, we lose the true Christ, and make him unprofitable unto us. LUTHER.

(A Dialogue.)

*Epaphroditus*.—But one thing greatly discourages me : I have no merits, nor plenty of good works wherewith I may make God favourable to me ; but I am a barren fig-tree, void of all good fruit.

*Philemon*.—The want of merits ought not to keep you from coming unto God. God saveth us not for the righteous works which we have done, but for his mercies' sake. If our salvation came of works and merits, then were grace no more grace. If everlasting life were gotten by deservings, then were it not the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. But the Apostle saith, *By grace are ye saved through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God, and cometh not by works, lest any man should boast himself—If righteousness come of the law, then Christ is dead in vain—Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*. And we are taught in the Gospel, that *joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance*. What had the wounded man deserved, that he should be healed ? What had the strayed sheep merited, that the shepherd should so lovingly fetch it home again ? What good works brought Mary Magdalene, when Christ received her unto grace, and forgave her her sins ?—and so likewise of many others. If God should save us because of our merits and good works, so should we choose God by our works and merits ; and God not us, by his favour, grace, and mercy. But Christ saith, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you*. And St. John, wondering at this great mercy of God, bursts out into these words, and saith, *Behold what love the Father hath shewed on us, that we should be called the sons of God*. Again, *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the agree-*

*ment for our sins. Praise thou the Lord, O my soul, and forget not his benefits; who forgiveth all thy sins, and healeth all thine iniquities; who saveth thy life from destruction, and crowneth thee with mercy and loving kindness.* All good men, from the very beginning, have attributed and given the whole glory of their justification not to their own merits and good works, but to the free grace and undeserved mercy of God, that God may be all in all; and that he who rejoices should rejoice in the Lord.

For the contentation and quietness of your conscience in this behalf, remember that *Christ came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.* Remember that Christ is a physician, and that *the whole have no need of a physician, but such as are sick.* Remember that Christ calleth unto him all such as are diseased, and laden with the burden of sin. He requireth no merits, only *Come.* Remember that *the Son of Man came to seek and to save that that was lost.* Remember that Christ is called a Saviour, that he should save them which otherwise should perish. Hear also what God saith by the prophet Isaiah, *Come to the waters all ye that are thirsty; and ye that have no money, come, buy, that ye may have to eat; come, buy wine and milk without any money, or money's worth. Wherefore do you lay out your money for the thing that feedeth not, and spend your labour about the thing that satisfieth you nothing? But hearken you rather unto me, and ye shall eat of the best, and your soul shall have her pleasure in plenteousness. Incline your ears, and come unto me; take heed, I say, and your soul shall live.* Our Saviour Christ also saith, *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.* Again, in another place, *I will give to him that is athirst, of the well of the water of life. He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.* Also, *Let him that is athirst come, and let whosoever will, take of the water of life freely.* Here is the favour of God, remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost, quietness of conscience, and everlasting life, promised freely without merits or deserts, to so many as will come unto Christ with a repentant heart and faithful mind. For, Christ was sent of God the Father to *preach good tidings unto the poor, that he might bind up the wounded hearts, that he might preach deliverance to*

*the captive, and open the prison to them that are bound; declare the acceptable year of the Lord, and comfort all them that are in heaviness. He came into this world to save sinners.* Therefore let it not dismay you, though you find in yourself a great many sins, and good works very few. Cast rather the eyes of your mind with strong faith on Christ and on his righteousness, on his merits, passion, and death, on his blessed body-breaking and his precious blood-shedding. Believe him to be ordained of God the Father, to be your wisdom and righteousness, your sanctification and redemption, that, as it is written, *He that rejoiceth should rejoice in the Lord. Count all your merits, good works, and righteousness, vile and of no price, for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Labour to win Christ, and to be found in him,* &c. Phil. iii. 8—10.

REV. T. BECON.

*Those who are discouraged because they cannot ascertain when their Conversion commenced.*

Do you know the exact time of your natural birth? None can answer they do from their own knowledge and memory; and though some cannot obtain certain information from any one on what day, or even in what year they were born, yet they do not doubt of the fact. As effects in natural things lead back to their respective causes, and are infallible proofs of their reality, so it is in spiritual affairs. In this manner we are taught in Scripture to proceed, in order to gain assurance respecting facts which fall not under immediate personal observation. As, saith the Apostle, *every house is builded by some man;* as therefore every structure, from the princely palace to the meanest cottage, are incontestable proofs of human agency, so as saints are God's workmanship, *created anew in Christ Jesus, and habitations of God through the Spirit,* the nature of the change produced in them claims Jehovah for its Author; therefore, as the Apostle adds, *he that buildeth all things is God,* Heb. iii. 4. The great inquiry should be, Whether we are the subjects of the heavenly birth or not? for, as to the time when, it is an immaterial circumstance, any further than as related to the question, *How old art thou?* As it is not necessary to know the time of your natural birth, in order to prove your proper hu-

manity, neither is the knowledge of your spiritual birth, as to the time when, at all needful to evidence your true Christianity; the change may be demonstrably evident, though the time when it first commenced be uncertain. To know whether a person is born again, it should be considered that the work of the Spirit of God upon the soul, whereby sinners are denominated *new creatures*, is set forth by figurative language. As there are new principles or dispositions produced, it is called a creation. *Created in Christ Jesus*, Eph. ii. 10. As it bears a resemblance to procreation, it is therefore called a *regeneration* and a *new birth*. These terms are used for the purpose of illustrating its nature; the evident and plain import of which are to point out, that a person who is the subject of such a gracious change, feels and views himself to be in such circumstances, in a spiritual sense, as resemble the natural condition of an infant; for such persons feel themselves feeble and forlorn; they are convinced of their utter inability to provide for the least of their numerous wants, or even to describe them; *like a new-born babe they desire the sincere milk of the word*, which they relish, taste the sweetness of, and are nourished by. They are dependent entirely on the Lord's care and kindness, who loves them, deals tenderly with them, feeds them with what is convenient for them, as they are able to bear it, clothes them with the *robe of righteousness and garments of salvation*. He teaches them gradually the things relating to the kingdom of grace into which they are brought, and of which they are naturally ignorant; *for they shall be all taught of the Lord*, Isa. liv. 13. As they have a disposition for spiritual activity, so the Lord increases their strength, takes them by the hand, teaches them to go, Hos. xi. 3. As they grow in acquaintance with their heavenly Father, and the household of faith, they feel a love to God, a fear of him, have their dependence upon him, and are desirous of his presence, protection, and guidance. They love all the people of God, and those the best who, as they think, most resemble him. Those, therefore, who are thus dependent upon God, humble before him, having a relish for divine things, or, in a word, dispositions towards God of a filial nature, becoming a child to his father and family; such have the evidences of being born again, they having been

brought with godly simplicity to *receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child*, without which, the Redeemer has declared, *no man can in any wise enter therein*, Luke xviii. 17. Thus the feeble state and forlorn condition of the Jews, when God first entered into covenant with them as a people, and they became his special property and care, is illustrated by an infant (Ezek. xvi.) in the most deplorable condition. So the spiritual experiences of his people, both sorrowful and sweet, are represented by the metaphor of a helpless infant, under the kind care of its loving, compassionate, and prudent parent. Again, such bear the likeness of their Father God; as by their first birth they partake of *the image of the earthly*, so by their second birth *they are made partakers of the heavenly*; *for that which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit*, John iii. 6. They that are born again, love what God does, and hate what he abhors, which gradually increaseth as they grow in grace, or to maturity, as *perfect men in Christ Jesus*. A holy disposition is therefore an infallible proof of a heavenly descent, or that such are *born again*.

REV. ROB. HALL.

*Those who do not distinguish between being surprised into Sin, and being led captive by Sin.*

WHAT surprisals into sin soever may befall an upright soul, yet it appears by these following particulars, that he is not the servant of sin, nor in full subjection to it. For,

1. Though he may be drawn to sin, yet he cannot reflect upon his sin without shame and sorrow; which plainly shews it to be an involuntary surprise. So Peter wept bitterly, Matt. xxvi. 75. And David mourned for his sin heartily. Others can fetch new pleasures out of their old sins, by reflecting on them; and some can glory in their shame, Phil. iii. 19; some are stupid and senseless after sin; and the sorrow of a carnal heart for it, is but a morning dew: but it is far otherwise with God's people.

2. Though a saint may be drawn to sin, yet it is not with a deliberate and full consent of his will; *their delight is in the law of God*, Rom. vii. 22. *They do that which they would not*, ver. 16. i. e. there are inward dislikes from the new nature:

and as for that case of David, which seems to have so much of counsel and deliberation in it, yet it was but in a single act; it was not in the general course of his life; he was upright in all things, i. e. in the general course and tenour of his life, 1 Kings xv. 5.

3. Though an upright soul may fall into sin, yet he is restless and inquiet in that condition, like a bone out of joint; and that speaks him to be none of sin's servants; as, on the contrary, if a man be engaged in the external duties of religion, and be restless, and inquiet there, his heart is not in it, he is not at rest till he be again in his earthly business; this man cannot be reckoned Christ's servant: a gracious heart is much after that rate employed in the work of sin, that a carnal heart is employed in the work of religion. That is a good rule, *Ea tantum dicuntur inesse, quæ insunt per modum quietis*: That is a man's true temper, wherein he is at rest. David fell into sin, but he had no rest in his bones because of it, Psalm xxxviii. 3. If his heart be off from God and duty for a little while, yet he recollects himself, and saith, as Psal. cxvi. 7. *Return to thy rest, O my soul.*

4. Though a sincere Christian fall into sin and commit evil; yet he proceeds not from evil to evil, as the ungodly do, Jer. ix. 3., but makes his fall into one sin a caution to prevent another sin. Peter by his fall got establishment for the time to come. If God will speak peace to them, they are careful to return no more to folly, Psalm lxxxv. 8. *In that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought! yea, what fear!* 2 Cor. vii. 11. It is not so with the servants of sin, one sin leaves them much more disposed to another sin.

5. A sincere Christian may be drawn to sin, but yet he would be glad with all his heart to be rid of sin: it would be more to him than thousands of gold and silver, that he might grieve and offend God no more; and that shews sin is not in dominion over him: he that is under the dominion of sin, is loath to leave his lusts. Sin's servants are not willing to part with it, they hold it fast, and refuse to let it go, as that text expresseth it, Jer. viii. 5. But the great complaint of the upright is expressed by the Apostle according to the true sense of their hearts, in Rom. vii. 24. *Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?*

6. It appears they yield not themselves willingly to obey sin, inasmuch as it is the matter of their joy when God orders any providence to prevent sin in them: *Blessed be the Lord*, (said David to Abigail,) *and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou that hast kept me this day from shedding blood*, 1 Sam. xxv. 32, 33.

Here is blessing upon blessing for a sin-preventing providence. The author is blessed, the instrument blessed, the means blessed. O it is a blessed thing in the eyes of a sincere man to be kept from sin! he reckons it a great deliverance; a very happy escape, if he be kept from sin.

7. This shews that some who may be drawn to commit sin, yet are none of the servants of sin, that they do heartily beg the assistance of grace to keep them from sin: *Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins*, (saith the Psalmist, Psalm xix. 13.) *let them not have dominion over me*; q. d. Lord, I find propensions to sin in my nature, yea, and strong ones too; if thou leave me to myself, I am carried into sin as easily as a feather down the torrent. *O Lord, keep back thy servant.* And there is no petition that upright ones pour out their hearts to God in, either more frequently or more ardently than in this, to be kept back from sin.

8. This shews the soul not to be under the dominion of sin, that it doth not only cry to God to be kept back from sin, but uses the means of prevention himself; he resists it, as well as prays against it. *I was also upright before him, and kept myself from mine iniquity*, Psalm xviii. 23. *I have made a covenant with mine eyes*, Job xxxi. 1. And yet more fully in Isa. xxxiii. 15. *He shaketh his hands from holding bribes, and stoppeth his ears from hearing blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil.* See with what care the portals are shut at which sin useth to enter. All these things are very relieving considerations to poor souls questioning their integrity under the frequent surprisals of sin.

FLAVEL.

*Those who conclude themselves lost while walking in darkness.*

BUT you will say, Have not the best of God's children sometimes concluded themselves to be reprobated and cast away? Have they not lain under sad and fearful apprehensions of God's wrath? Have not some of them, who formerly walked in the

light of God's countenance and flourished in their assurance, yet afterwards have been so dejected, that they would not entertain any comfort or hopes of mercy and salvation?

To this I answer, It is true, it may indeed so happen that those saints, whose joys and comforts are at one time fresh and verdant, at another time wither and drop off, so that they look upon themselves as rotten trees, destined to make fuel for hell. Whence proceeds this? It is not from the Spirit of God; but as carnal men are apt to mistake the first work of conviction for melancholy or for temptation, so this really proceeds from one of these two causes.—

When the children of God, after full assurance, come again not only to entertain doubts of their condition, but also to despair of themselves, looking on themselves as persons that God hath singled out to destruction; this proceeds not from the Holy Ghost, but from melancholy or temptation. Sometimes natural melancholy obstructs the sense of Divine comfort: as it is in clear water, when it is still and transparent the sun shines to the very bottom, but if you stir the mud, presently it grows so thick, that no light can pierce into it; so it is with the children of God, though their apprehensions of God's love be as clear and transparent sometimes as the very air that the angels and glorified saints breathe in, in heaven, yet if once the muddy humour of melancholy stirs, they become dark, so that no light or ray of comfort can break in to the deserted soul. And then, sometimes the devil causeth these tragedies by his temptations, that so, if it were possible, he might drive them to despair; he hates their graces, he envies their comforts, and therefore he would persuade them that all their former joys were delusions, proud dreams, and presumptuous fancies, and that they are still in the *gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity*; and by such suggestions as these are, when he cannot hinder the work of grace, he swives what he can to hinder the sense of comfort. When, therefore, those that have once rejoiced under the comfortable persuasions of God's love to them, the Holy Ghost witnessing himself to them to be a *Spirit of Adoption*, by being in them a Spirit of Sanctification; if they now find themselves under the bondage of legal fears and terrors and slavish dejections, looking upon themselves

as under the revenging wrath of God, and as persons devoted to destruction; let them know such fears proceed not from the convictions of the Spirit of God, who hath been a Spirit of Adoption, but they proceed from the delusions of Satan; for those that once receive the *Spirit of Adoption*, never receive the *Spirit of Bondage again to fear*; that is, to fear with a slavish, tormenting fear.

BP. HOPKINS.

*Those who think they have not the testimony of the Spirit, because they cannot always perceive it in them.*

SOME of the children of God, because they find not always within themselves this testimony of the Spirit in a like measure, are therefore cast down and made oftentimes to think they never had it: for as none are more ready to boast of the Spirit than they who have him not; so none complain more that they want him, than they who possess him. The children of God in this being like unto rich worldlings, who suppose they be possessors of much, yet the great desire of more which is in them, causeth them to esteem that which they have as nothing, and therefore comfort not themselves with the lawful use of that which they have, but vex their spirits with restless thoughts for that which they want: even so it is customable with the children of God, albeit they have attained to a good manner of faith and love of God, and are even become rich in the grace of the Lord Jesus; yet are they so desirous of more, that many a time they esteem nothing of that which they have, but go about mourning and complaining that they have no faith, no love, no grace, no life; in which extremity we see, that many in their weakness offend the Lord their God. Herein, therefore, is the Christian to be admonished that he keeps mediocrity: to lament they wants and thirst for more grace, is a sure token of a spiritual life; but let us so complain for that which we want, that we be comforted in God for that beginning and little measure of grace which we have; remember that the same mouth of God which commands thee to mourn, commands thee also to rejoice; we want not matter for both; matter we have of mourning, for which we may lament with the Apostle, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. Matter

of joy we have also in our God, for which we may rejoice with him, and say, *I thank God, through Jesus Christ*, verse 19: surely it cannot be without unthankfulness unto God so to mourn for our wants, that we give not praise to God for the beginning of grace we have.

And for this same effect, let us yet further consider, that this testimony of the Spirit is not at all times enjoyed in a like measure, for that were to enjoy heaven upon earth. The Lord, therefore, doth in such sort dispense it, that sometimes he lets his children feel it for their consolation, and again withdraws it from them for their humiliation: when they feel it, they so abound in joy, that all the terrors and threatenings of Satan, all his promises and allurements are despised of them, and trodden under their feet; they sing within themselves that glorious triumph of the Apostle, *Who shall separate us from the love of God?* Rom. viii. 35: but this joy proceeding from the fulness of faith, continues not, the voice of the Spirit of Adoption waxing somewhat more silent, fears and doubts succeed in that same heart which before abounded with joy: and this for our humiliation.

But now in this estate, lest the children of God be discouraged by the silence of the testimony, let them first of all have recourse to the fore-past working of God in them, let them call to mind with David the days of old, remember their joyful songs, by which they have praised God, their humble prayers by which many a time they have gotten access to the throne of grace, and these heavenly motions which have replenished their souls with joy, and so of the former footsteps of his grace, let them discern his presence even then when they cannot perceive them. And next, let them consider, that the godly in the time of their desertion, which is their spiritual disease, are evil judges of themselves, for they perceive not that which they possess: there may be an invincible hope of mercy in that soul, wherein for the present there is no sense of mercy; and this all the children of God may mark in their own experience: for whereof I pray thee hath it come, that thou a weak man hast fought so long against principalities and powers? hast endured so many years the fearful assaults of Satan? thou hast been troubled with doubting, but hast not despaired; thou hast been cast down, and

hast not perished; thou hast fallen, and yet risen again; thy enemy hath thrust sore at thee, yet hath he not prevailed against thee. No power, no policy of Satan hath ever been able to quench in thee that spark of life, which the Lord hath breathed into thee. Out of all doubt, thy standing hath been from the Spirit of Adoption, who hath wrought in thine heart a deeper sense of mercy, than that any contrary power is able to root out, yea, or thou thyself art able to perceive: hereof hath come thy standing both in tentations, which are from thine adversaries, and in those desertions, whereby the Lord hath exercised thee. Thus have we comfort not only in the glorious effects of God's mercy wrought in us, when we feel his presence, but also by our standing and perseverance in desertions, wherein it seems to us that the Lord hath absented himself from us: two excellent comforts, for the Christian; for thy standing in desertions proves that thou wert not deserted: apparent desertions are not desertions indeed: *Surely the Lord will not fail his people, nor forsake his inheritance*, Psalm xciv. 14. Again, thy standing against so many assaults of the devil, proves that the least spark of Christ's lively grace in a Christian, is stronger than that the gates of hell are able to prevail against it. Be therefore comforted, O thou man of God; for if it had been in Satan's power to have quenched thy life, he would have put it out long ere now: be assured thou shalt prevail and obtain the victory, in the strength and might of that mighty Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. BR. COWPER.

Though there is nothing more dangerous, yet there is nothing more ordinary, than for weak saints to make their sense and feeling the judge of their condition, which is dishonourable to God, and very disadvantageous to yourselves. Sense is sometimes opposite to reason, but always to faith; therefore do as those worthies did in 2 Cor. v. 7; *We walk by faith, and not by sight*. For a man to argue thus, 'Surely God is not my God, for I am not enlightened, I am not quickened, I am not melted, I am not raised, I am not enlarged, as formerly; O! I have not those sweet answers and returns of prayer, that once I had; I cannot find the Lord's quickening presence, nor his enlivening presence, nor his humbling presence, nor



his encouraging presence, as once I found; therefore surely my condition is not good. O! I am more backward to good, than formerly; and more prone to evil, than formerly; therefore I am afraid that God is not my God, and that the work of grace is not genuine upon me. God does not look upon me as in the days of old; nor speak to me as in the days of old; nor carry it towards me as in the days of old; and therefore I am afraid that all is naught.' Verily, if you will make sense and feeling the judge of your estate and condition, you will never have peace nor comfort all your days. Thy estate, O Christian, may be very good, when sense and feeling say it is very bad. That child cannot but be perplexed, that thinks his father does not love him, because he does not always feel him smoothing and stroking him. Christians, you must remember, that it is one thing for God to love you, and another thing for God to tell you that he loves you. Your happiness lies in the first, your comfort in the second. God has stopped his ears against the prayers of many a precious soul, whom he has dearly loved. The best of men have at times lost that quickening, ravishing, and comforting presence of God, which once they have enjoyed. And, verily, he who makes sense and carnal reason a judge of his condition, will be happy and miserable, blessed and cursed, saved and lost, many times in a day, yea, in an hour.

The counsel that I would give to such a soul as is apt to set up reason in the room of faith, is this—whatsoever thy estate and condition be, never make sense and feeling the judge of it, but only the word of God. Did ever God appoint carnal reason, sense and feeling, to be a judge of thy spiritual estate? Surely no; and why then wilt thou subject thy soul to their judgments? God will judge thee at last by his word; *The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day.* Carnal reason is an enemy to faith, it is ever crossing and contradicting faith. It fills the mind full of cavils and prejudices, full of pleas and arguments to keep Christ and the soul asunder, and the soul and the promise asunder, and the soul and peace and comfort asunder. It will never be well with thee, so long as thou art swayed by carnal reason. Remember Job was as famous for his confidence, as for his patience; *Though he slay me, yet will*

*I trust in him,* Job xiii. 15. As the body lives by breathing, so the soul lives by believing. REV. T. BROOKES.

*Those who are discouraged because they cannot grieve enough for their Sins.*

YOUR sorrow is, that you cannot enough grieve for your sins. Let me tell you, that the angels themselves sing at this lamentation; neither doth the earth afford any so sweet music in the ears of God. This heaviness is the way to joy. Worldly sorrow is worthy of pity, because it leadeth to death; but this deserves nothing but envy and gratulation. If those tears were common, hell would not so enlarge itself. Never sin, repented of, was punished; and never any thus mourned, and repented not. Lo, you have done that which you grieve you have not done. That good God, whose act is his will, accounts of our will as our deed. If he required sorrow proportionable to the heinousness of our sins, there were no end of mourning. Now his mercy regards not so much the measure as the truth of it, and accounts us to have that which we complain to want. I never knew any truly penitent, who in the depth of his remorse was afraid of sorrowing too much; nor any unrepentant, who wished to sorrow more. Yea, let me tell you, that this sorrow is better and more than that deep heaviness for sin, which you desire. Many have been vexed with an extreme remorse for some sin, from the gripes of a galled conscience, which yet never came where true repentance grew; in whom the conscience plays at once the accuser, witness, judge, tormentor; but an earnest grief, for the want of grief, was never found in any but a gracious heart. You are happy, and complain. Tell me, I beseech you, this sorrow which you mourn to want, is it a grace of the Spirit of God, or not? If not, why do you sorrow to want it? If it be, oh, how happy is it to grieve for want of grace! The God of all truth and blessedness hath said, *Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness; and with the same breath, Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.* You say you mourn, Christ saith you are blessed; you say you mourn, Christ saith you shall be comforted. Either now distrust your Saviour, or else confess your happiness, and with patience expect his promised consolation. What

do you fear? you see others stand like strong oaks, unshaken, unremoved: you are but a reed, a feeble plant, tossed and bowed with every wind, and with much agitation bruised. Lo, you are in tender and favourable hands, that never brake any, whom their sins bruised, never bruised any whom temptations have bowed. You are but flax, and your best is not a flame, but an obscure smoke of grace. Lo, here his Spirit is as a soft wind, not as cold water; he will kindle, will never quench you. The sorrow you want is his gift: take heed, lest while you vex yourself with dislike of the measure, you grudge at the giver. Beggars may not choose. This portion he hath vouchsafed to give you; if you have any, it is more than he was bound to bestow; yet you say, what, no more?—as if you took it unkindly that he is no more liberal. Even these holy discernments are dangerous. Desire more, so much as you can, but repine not when you do not attain. Desire, but so as you be free from impatience, free from unthankfulness. Those that have tried can say how difficult it is to complain, with due reservation of thanks. Neither know I whether it is worse to long for good things impatiently, or not at all to desire them. The fault of your sorrow is rather in your conceit, than in itself. And if indeed you mourn not enough, stay but God's leisure, and your eyes shall run over with tears. How many do you see sport with their sins, yea, brag of them! How many that should die for want of pastime if they might not sin freely, and more freely talk of it! What a saint are you to these, that can droop under the memory of the frailty of youth, and never think you have spent enough of tears! Yet so I encourage you in what you have, as one that persuades you not to desist from suing for more. It is good to be covetous of grace, and to have our desires herein enlarged with our receipts. Weep still, and still desire to weep; but let your tears be as the rain in the sunshine, comfortable and hopeful; and let not your longing savour of murmur or distrust. These tears are reserved, this hunger shall be satisfied, this sorrow shall be comforted. There is nothing betwixt God and you but time. Prescribe not to his wisdom; hasten not his mercy. His grace is enough for you; his glory shall be more than enough.

BP. HALL.

*Those who are discouraged from a sense of want of love to God.*

It may be thou art hindered from living by unshaken faith, because thou hast so little love to God; he ought to have all thy heart and soul, and mind and strength, but it grieves thee to observe what a small part he has of them. This view is always humbling. Our love, at best, is not what it ought to be. It is not constant: it ebbs and flows. It is not perfect: the flesh lusteth always contrary to the Spirit. It is not what God deserves as payment for love received: who will compute the full value of his love to one redeemed sinner? On earth it surpasseth knowledge; in heaven it surpasseth all returns of praise. The highest love of glorified saints is only acknowledgment, but not payment. They are perfectly humble, and therefore willing that God should have all the glory of their salvation. To him they ascribe it. The same mind in thee would refine thy love, and make it something like theirs. When thou art considering thy love to God, and ashamed at the sight of it, then look at his. Look especially at his, when thine is little. Believing views of his will increase thine; thine has nothing else to excite it, or to nourish it. Thou art not called upon to warm thyself with the sparks of *thy* love to God, but with the pure constant flame of *his* love to *thee*. His is to keep up thine. His is the first cause, and thine is but the effect. The experience of his will heal all the infirmities of thine. When thy love is little, unsettled, cold, and dull, then study the Divine properties of his; these, rightly understood, will increase, settle, warm, and actuate thine affections. By believing meditation, thou wilt find a pardon provided for thy little love; the sense of it will comfort thy conscience. Thy heart will grow hot within thee; while thou art musing the fire will kindle. It will break out. Thou wilt speak with thy tongue praise and thanksgiving to thy loving God and Father.

REV. W. ROMAINE.

*Those who are discouraged on account of their indisposition to religious duties.*

It is no uncommon thing with gracious minds, to discover in themselves a greater indisposition to religious duties, when they are actually engaged in those duties; and like the Apostle of old, *then*, more espe-

cially, *when they would do good, evil is present with them*, Rom. vii. 21. And the reason is plain. Corruption in the heart is then most likely to break out, when we are taking pains to suppress it. And as the swelling tide rages with more fury in proportion to the obstructions it meets with in its way: so the corruptions of our fallen nature will form a tide of a more furious current in our affections, when by drawing nigh to God we seek to throw up a fence to resist, and keep them under.

Neither, in those seasons, do gracious souls find more immediate resistance from the corruptions of their own nature, arising within only; for the temptations of the enemy from without also, as generally assail with most violence when they draw nigh the mercy-seat. He knows full well what effects are induced from the soul's communion with God, to undermine his kingdom in the heart, and therefore, as of old, the prophet was shewn when *Joshua the high priest stood before the angel of the Lord, Satan was standing at his right hand to resist him*, Zech. iii. 1.; even so it is now; when the Lord's people in the righteousness and strength of their spiritual Joshua stand before the Lord, Satan still resists, by inducing wandering thoughts, calling off the affections, and harassing the mind with evil suggestions and unbelief, that their prayers may be hindered.

And if you ask, why the Lord permits these things under which his people go heavily from day to day? The answer is direct. It is to humble them before the mercy-seat; to make them more and more sensible of the plague of their own heart; to let them see that all preparation is from the Lord, so that self-confidence may be rooted out, and Christ alone rooted in. By this sweet process of his grace the Lord over-rules evil for good, in teaching most feelingly that our best services, our purest prayers, our most holy things, can only *be accepted in the Beloved*: for our very robes must be all washed, as those were which John saw of the saints in glory, *in the blood of the Lamb*. All this, I confess, is a humbling lesson to the sinner, but it sweetly tends to the exaltation of the Saviour, when we recollect at all times, that *he bears the iniquity of our most holy things*, as the high priest represented him of old, Exodus xxviii. 38. And it ought to be the most refreshing consideration to a poor bowed-down soul in the hour of

prayer, when groaning under the united pressure of in-dwelling corruption and the attacks of Satan, to call to mind that though we are all sin, Jesus our Advocate is all righteousness; and while in ourselves we cannot but appear full of evil before God; yet in him we are accepted, who, while he appears before God, appears purposely for his people. DA. HAWKER.

*Those who are discouraged by the apprehension of the weakness of their Faith.*

THAT mere natural men do neither know nor acknowledge the things of God, we do not marvel, *because they are spiritually to be discerned*: but they in whose hearts the light of grace doth shine, they that are taught of God, why are they so weak in faith? Why is their assenting to the law so scrupulous? so much mingled with fear and wavering? It seemeth strange that ever they should imagine the law to fail. It cannot seem strange if we weigh the reason. If the things which we believe be considered in themselves, it may truly be said, that faith is more certain than any science. That which we know, either by sense, or by infallible demonstration, is not so certain as the principles, articles, and conclusions of Christian faith, concerning which we must note that there is a certainty of evidence, and a certainty of adherence. Certainty of evidence we call that, when the mind doth assent to this or that, not because it is true in itself, but because the truth is clear, because it is manifest unto us. Of things in themselves most *certain*, except they be also most *evident*, our persuasion is not so assured, as it is of things more evident, although in themselves they be less *certain*. It is as sure, if not surer, that there be spirits, as that there be men: but we be more assured of these than of them, because these are more evident. The truth of some things is so evident, that no man which heareth them can doubt of them: as when we hear that a part of any thing is less than the whole, the mind is constrained to say, This is true. If it were so in matters of faith, then, as all men have equal certainty of this, so no believer should be more scrupulous and doubtful than another. But we find the contrary. The angels and spirits of the righteous in heaven have certainty most evident of things spiritual: but this they have by the light of glory. That which we see by the

light of grace, though it be indeed more certain; yet it is not to us so evidently certain, as that which sense or the light of nature will not suffer a man to doubt of. Proofs are vain and frivolous, except they be more certain, than is the thing proved: and do we not see how the Spirit every where in the Scripture proving matters of faith, laboureth to confirm us in the things which we believe, by things whereof we have sensible knowledge? I conclude, therefore, that we have less *certainty of evidence* concerning things believed, than concerning sensible or naturally perceived. Of those who doth doubt at any time? Of them at sometime who doubteth not? I will not here allege the sundry confessions of the perfectest that have lived upon earth, concerning their great imperfections this way; which if I did, I should dwell too long upon a matter sufficiently known by every faithful man that doth know himself.

The other, which we call the *certainty of adherence*, is, when the heart doth cleave and stick unto that which it doth believe. This certainty is greater in us than the other. The reason is this, the faith of a Christian doth apprehend the words of the law, the promises of God, not only as true, but also as good; and therefore even then, when the evidence which he hath of the truth is so small, that it grieveth him to feel his weakness in assenting thereto, yet is there in him such a sure adherence unto that which he doth but faintly and fearfully believe, that his spirit having once truly tasted the heavenly sweetness thereof, all the world is not able quite and clean to remove him from it: but he striveth with himself to hope against all reason of believing, being settled with Job upon this immovable resolution, *Though God kill me, I will not give over trusting in him.* For why? This lesson remaineth for ever imprinted in him, *It is good for me to cleave unto God,* Psalm xxxvii.

Now the minds of all men being so darkened as they are with the foggy damp of original corruption, it cannot be that any man's heart living should be either so enlightened in the knowledge, or so established in the love of that wherein his salvation standeth, as to be perfect, neither doubting nor shrinking at all. If any such were, what doth let why that man should not be justified by his own inhe-

rent righteousness? For righteousness inherent, being perfect, will justify. And perfect faith is a part of perfect righteousness inherent; yea, a principal part, the root and the mother of all the rest: so that if the fruit of every tree be such as the root is, faith being perfect, as it is if it be not at all mingled with distrust and fear, what is there to exclude other Christian virtues from the like perfections? And then what need we the righteousness of Christ? His garment is superfluous: we may be honourably clothed with our own robes, if it be thus. But let them beware, who challenge to themselves strength which they have not, lest they lose the comfortable support of that weakness which indeed they have.

Some *shew*, although no *soundness* of ground there is which may be alleged for defence of this supposed perfection in certainty, touching matters of our faith; as 1st, That Abraham did believe, and doubted not: 2ndly, That the Spirit, which God hath given us to no other end, but only to assure us that we are the sons of God, to embolden us to call upon him as our Father, to open our eyes, and to make the truth of things believed evident unto our minds, is much mightier in operation than the common light of nature, whereby we discern sensible things: wherefore we must needs be more sure of that we believe, than of that we see; we must needs be more certain of the mercies of God in Christ Jesus, than we are of the light of the sun when it shineth upon our faces. 1. To the allegation that Abraham did not doubt, I answer, that this negation doth not exclude all fear, all doubting, but only that which cannot stand with true faith. It freeth Abraham from doubting through infidelity, not from doubting through infirmity; from the doubting of unbelievers, not of weak believers; from such a doubting as that whereof the prince of Samaria is attained, who hearing the promise of sudden plenty in the midst of extreme dearth, answered, *Though the Lord would make windows in heaven, were it possible so to come to pass?* But that Abraham was not void of all doubting, what need we any other proof, than the plain evidence of his own words? Gen. xvii. 17. 2. The reason which is taken from the power of the Spirit were effectual, if God did work like a natural agent, as the fire doth inflame, and the sun enlighten, according

to the uttermost ability which they have to bring forth their effects: but the incomprehensible wisdom of God doth limit the effects of his power to such a measure as it seemeth best to himself. Wherefore he worketh that certainty in all, which sufficeth abundantly to their salvation in the life to come; but in none so great as attaineth in this life unto perfection. Even so, O Lord, it hath pleased thee; even so it is best and fittest for us, that feeling still our own infirmities, we may no longer breathe than pray *Adjuva Domine, Help, Lord, our incredulity.* HOOKER.

*Reflections for those who are weak in Faith, and whose Progress in the Divine life is gradual.*

MANY are apt to think that they do not enjoy a life of faith in Christ, unless they find *all joy and peace in believing*; when, alas! the life of faith principally consists in believing in hope, *counting him faithful that hath promised*, when there seems no human possibility of its being accomplished. This evidences the strength and life of faith much more than being in a spiritual elevation, through the manifestation of divine love, and brings more glory to God. REV. T. ALLEN.

The health of the soul is more seen in its desires than its enjoyments.

REV. W. ROMAINE.

Their progress in the divine life, though more gradual, is solid, and is as real as those that are more rapturous and joyful, and commonly leaves the most abiding comfort: they are equally safe as those that are *strong in faith*, and are commonly led in a smoother path through the wilderness than others, by which it appears that the Lord is tender in his compassions to his people. REV. T. ALLEN.

Consolation is one thing, faith another. This latter grace often lays hold of the promises made in Christ with the firmest grasp, at the very time when hope and comfort are interrupted by the morbid state of the bodily and mental powers. Our feelings and frames, thank God, are not the foundation upon which we build. Never perhaps was stronger faith exhibited, even by our Saviour himself, than when he

uttered those piercing words, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

REV. D. WILSON.

We trust not to our good frames, or warm feelings, or sensible comforts, or to any of the genuine fruits and effects of faith, but we trust what God says simply, as his record: and therefore we walk in a constant dependence of the truth of God in his word, and upon the faithfulness of God to his word. True faith has no foundation, when given, but the word of God; nothing to rest on but the Divine truth, no support but the Divine power, and no growth but from the Divine influence.

REV. W. ROMAINE.

It was not the *strength* of sight, which was the security of the Israelite when looking on the brazen serpent; a glimmering view from a distance was equally effectual as the clearest vision: so it is not the *strength* of faith, but *faith itself* which unites to Jesus, and derives from him the blessings of salvation.

REV. W. GOODE.

Though I cannot always say in full assurance of faith, Christ loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*, yet I can always in the fullest assurance of faith say, Christ loved sinners, and gave himself for sinners.

W. MASON.

We should bear in mind, that our first coming to Christ by faith, or believing on him, is not a believing that we *shall* be saved by him, but a believing on him that we *may* be saved by him.

REV. R. TRAILL.

Your business is with Jesus, with his free, unmerited love, with his glorious promises, &c., and you are called to live by faith on the faithful heart of Christ. Do not then puzzle yourself about contrition, faithfulness, love, joy, power over sin, and a thousand such things, which Satan will persuade you you must bring to Christ. He will receive you gladly with the great mountain of sin; and the smallest grain of faith at Christ's feet will remove that mountain.

REV. J. FLETCHER.

When thy love to God is little, and thou art ashamed of it, then look especially at his love, for thou art not called upon to

warm thyself with the sparks of thy love to God, but with the pure constant flame of his love to thee, which is to keep up thine.

ROMAINE.

We should ever bear in mind, that God loves us, not as sinless, but as he views us in Christ. Thus, though the believer be an object of mercy, a subject of grace, and an heir of promise; yet not one single drop of mercy or grace, nor one word of promise is made *to his person*, but only as he stands in, and is related to, his gracious Saviour, according to covenant love.

W. MASON.

Our hope depends not upon the exercise of grace in us, but upon the fulness of grace and love *in the Lord*, and upon *his obedience unto death*.

REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Christians may mistake their case, by measuring their growth by advances of the top only, not of the root. Though a man be not growing taller, he may be growing stronger. If a tree be taking with the ground, fixing itself in the earth, and spreading out its roots; it is certainly growing, although it be not taller than formerly. But who is sufficient to raise the drooping spirits of believers, and dispel their doubts and fears?

REV. T. BOSTON.

We may examine ourselves at some seasons without advantage. Our souls being in the dark, we may not be able to see any thing in us that looks like the work of God: or we may be afraid of drawing a wrong conclusion. We must therefore not compare ourselves with yesterday, if we would know whether we have got any more steps in our way to heaven. It might be much better with us yesterday than to-day as to the frame of our souls, and yet we may in general have got some ground. If we would know our growth, we must look back to the time when we first gave up ourselves to the Redeemer, if we can remember it, and compare ourselves now with ourselves then.

HAYWARD & PYKE.

There is a more discernible growth and ripening, in some Christians than in others. The faith of some *groweth exceedingly*, 2 Thess. i. 3; of others, more slowly, Heb.

ANTH.

v. 12; but yet there are improvements of grace in all upright ones. Habits are more deeply radicated, or fruits of obedience more increased. If any upright soul be stumbled at this, as not being able to discern the increase of his graces after all his duties, let such consider, that the growth of grace is discerned as the growth of plants is; we perceive them rather to have grown, than to grow. Compare time past and present, and you may see a growth; but usually our eager desires after more, make us overlook what we have as nothing.

FLAVEL.

A due consideration of the omniscience of Christ, is a great encouragement to the meanest and weakest believers, who are upright and sincere. Hence he says of himself, that he *will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax*, Matt. xii. 20. Be our strength like that of a *bruised reed*, which is next to none at all, *he will not bruise it*; nay, he will cherish and add strength to it. Nor shall the *smoking flax*, the least degree imaginable of grace, be quenched, while under his eye and care. Let the weak believer, amidst all his doubts and perplexities, find relief in this, viz. that the Lord Christ, with whom we have to do, sees, knows, and approves the least spark of heavenly fire that is kindled in us by his Spirit. The least seed of grace that is planted in us, is under his eye and care, to preserve, water, and cherish it. He takes notice of the least endeavours of grace in the heart, against the power of sin; he perceives the principle and actings of grace, in that very trouble and sorrow, wherewith the soul is overwhelmed in apprehension of the want of it; he knows that much of a soul's trouble for want of grace, is from grace; he sees the love that works in trouble for want of faith, and the faith that works in trouble for want of holiness. . . .

Oftentimes holiness in the heart is more known by the opposition made to it, than by its own prevalent working; the Spirit's operation is known by the flesh's opposition. We find a man's strength by the burden he carries, rather than by the pace he goes. *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* is a better evidence of grace and holiness than, *God, I thank thee, I am not as other men*. In the soul's conflict with sin, what is it that is troubled and grieved

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in thee? What is it that cries out, and complains, and longs for deliverance? Is it not the *new creature*? Is it not the principle of spiritual life, whereof you are a partaker?

While we are in the flesh, our duties will taste of the vessel whence they proceed. Weakness, defilements, treachery, hypocrisy, will attend them. Hence the complaint of the Church, Isa. lxiv. 6. The chaff is sometimes so mixed with the wheat, the corn can scarcely be discerned. And the more spiritual any man is, the more he sees of his unspiritualness in his spiritual duties. An outside performance will satisfy an outside Christian. Job abhorred himself most when he knew himself best. The clearer discoveries we have of God, the viler will every thing of self appear. Further, duties and performances are oftentimes very ill measured by us. A man, when he has had distractions to wrestle with, no outward advantage to aid him, no extraordinary provocations of hope, fear, or sorrow, on a natural account, may rise from his knees with thoughts that he has done nothing in his duty but provoked God; when it may be there have been more workings of grace in contending with the deadness cast on the soul, than when by a concurrence of moved natural affections and outward provocations, a frame has been raised that has, to the man himself, seemed to reach to heaven. So that this perplexity about duties is nothing but what is common to the people of God, and ought to be no obstruction to peace.

DR. OWEN.

*Those who lay too much stress on their frames and feelings.*

YOUNG believers are liable to fall into a great mistake, which keeps their faith weak, and stops its growth, namely, a hearkening to sense, and trusting to its reports.

They are seeking to be established; and they think, that they should have no doubt of their being true believers, if they had but the testimony of sense, and comfortable feelings to assure them of it; and being used to judge in this way in other matters, for it is our strongest evidence in natural things, they are disposed to expect the same in spiritual; and they are the rather disposed to it, because sensible comforts are promised in Scripture; which being very desirable and pleasing to nature, they are apt to covet them too much,

and, from not regarding what the Scripture says about them, they are apt to seek them in a wrong way, and for a wrong end. Sense judges from what it sees, and draws its inferences from what it feels; so that its report to the conscience, either of a believer's state, or of his growth in it, is not from unchangeable things, which would settle the conscience in peace, but from changeable things, which leave room for continual doubting. Sense also looks at the fruits of faith more than at the object of it; and if the believer has been misled, and taught to confound these two together, he will be at great uncertainty in judging of his state: for, instead of making the word of God, he will make his comforts the ground of his faith, and as these are more or less, so will his faith be: when he has comfortable feelings, then he will think himself a believer; and, when he has none, then he will think himself an unbeliever, changing his judgment of himself, as his feelings do, like the wind, and varying as his comforts do, like the weather. This is a common case; I have seen the sad effects of it in the lives of many of my acquaintance, who, from being taught thus to judge of themselves, were tossed about for several years, up and down, now comforted, then doubting, and could not get any solid establishment, till the word and Spirit of God convinced them that sense was not to be the ground of their believing, nor the object to which they were to look. Sense judges by feeling, and reports what it sees. Sense says, Now I am in the favour of God, for I feel it: Now he is my God, for I find him so, I am comforted: Now he demonstrates it to me; for I feel nearness to him in prayer, and sweet answers: Now I am sure my duties and services are acceptable; for I am quite lively in them, and I come from them with warm affections: Now I cannot doubt, for I feel the assurance of his love to me. And when sense has lost those comfortable feelings, then it draws contrary inferences.—Now I am not in the favour of God, for I don't feel it: Now he is not my God; for I don't find him so, I am not comforted, &c. What can be the issue of this but continual wavering and changing? for our feelings are sometimes more, and sometimes less, as every believer experiences. What an unsettled state then must he be in, who has no way to judge of himself, but by those changeable

things! what room does he leave for continual doubting, and what trouble and misery does he thereby bring upon himself, as well as dishonour to the unchangeableness of God in his nature and promises!

If the poor weak believer should say, I am convinced of this, and I should be glad to have my faith so fixed, that I might be freed from doubts and fears; then let it rest upon the word of God, which is the only ground of believing, and is therefore called the word of faith, upon which faith is built, and by which it is nourished and grows up. The believer should receive and rely upon what God hath spoken, and because he hath spoken it; for his word changeth not. It abideth the same for ever; therefore, what it truly reports stands upon an immovable rock. Sense and feeling may report things contrary to it, but the believer can silence them with—God has spoken it; for his faith has evidence of things not seen, and he does not form his judgment by the things which are seen, but by the things which are not seen. Generally speaking, faith judges the very contrary to what sense perceives. Abraham, against hope, believed in hope: so do all his children. They believe the pardon of sin, victory over sin, and the death of sin; the immortality of the body, though crumbled to dust and atoms; the second coming of Christ, and the eternal state of happiness or misery. Faith looks at God's word, calling the things which be not, as though they were, and is commonly forced to contradict sense. Sense judges from what it sees—faith from what God says. Sense is governed by what appears—faith by what God says shall be. Sense looks inward—faith looks outward. Faith can answer the seeming contradictions, which sense opposes to it, from the word of God, which cannot be broken; and when sense is ready to despair, and all its fine frames and feelings are gone, then it is the believer's happy privilege still to trust in the Lord, and to have a good hope because of the word of his grace.

But perhaps thou art ready to say, It is written, that there is great joy and peace in believing, yea, joy unspeakable and full of glory. True, these are what faith produces, and not what it is. These are the fruits of faith, which it brings forth in most abundance from the inexhaustible fulness of Jesus. The more simple the believer

is, the more he eyes Christ the object of faith, and his word the ground of faith, the more clear and distinct will the actings of his faith be, and consequently it will bring greater peace into the conscience, and more joy into the affections: but still these fruits are not faith, no more than the fruit is the tree. The fruits do not go before faith, but follow it, and grow from it: this is God's order. He gives us his word to be the ground of our believing, and, by believing, all things promised in the word are made ours; then we go on comfortably, and are happy: but when sense is put in the place of the word, then the consequence is, that weak believers have got a changeable rule to judge of themselves by, which hinders them from being established in believing, and from attaining the promised peace and joy.

Some may begin to object, What! are you against all lively frames and sensible comforts? No, God forbid. I would have them spring from the right cause, that they might be more pure and fixed than they commonly are. God's word and promises are an unchangeable foundation to rest upon, even when sensible feelings are gone; because Christ revealed in the word, and laid hold of in the promises, changeth not. Therefore, reader, for thine own sake, and for the glory of God, take heed what thou buildest thy faith upon. Beware of making any thing, that sense reports to thee, the ground of it, but rest it upon that which abideth for ever. The word of God is a sure foundation. It will never fail thee. Thou mayest safely depend upon it, because it cannot be broken, and steadfastly rely upon Christ to make its promises good to thee. There is thy object: look at him. And since he is thine, thy Saviour and thy God, make use of him as such, and trust body and soul, and all things belonging to them, in his hands, and, among the rest, thy comforts. Be content he should give them to thee as seemeth him good. Set not thy heart upon them, nor follow him, as the multitude did, for the sake of his loaves and fishes, and the dainties that he gave them, who, when these were withheld, soon forsook their kind benefactor. Thou art by faith to make up all thy happiness in him, and in him only; and he himself, being thine, let him give thee or take away what he will besides,—thou hast enough. What! is not this comfort enough, that thou hast



got the *pearl of great price*, the infinitely rich, inestimably-precious Jesus? who has the wisdom of God to contrive what is best for thee, boundless love to dispose him, and almighty power to enable him to give it thee, and he has promised it: canst thou desire more? Walk then with him by faith, and not by sight. When the word of God is the ground of thy faith, which rests there and is grown to a fixed settlement, then thou wilt be enabled to go on comfortably, whatever thy frames and feelings be; yea, when these are at the lowest ebb, thou wilt not be thereby discouraged. Suppose thou art walking in darkness, thou canst walk by faith; because thou hast a promise, *Who is among you that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God*, Isaiah l. 10. Still, let him trust and believe. Why? Because God is his God still. Mind that—*his* God still; this blessed relation still subsists, and faith may draw comfort from it in the darkest hour. Suppose thou art in heaviness through manifold temptations, the word says to thee, *Heaviness may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning*: here thou mayest quiet thy heavy heart, and rest with confidence, till the Lord deliver thee out of thy temptations. Suppose God hideth his face from thee, thou hast the example of those in the same case, *I will wait for the Lord that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and will look for him*, Isaiah viii. 17. Wait in faith, looking for him, and thou shalt see the light of his countenance. Suppose all other comforts fail; thou hast one still, worth more than all—*This God is my God for ever and ever. He will never leave me nor forsake me*. This is the happiness of the true believer, he is enabled to maintain his confidence, when sensible feelings are no more. And thou seest, reader, how this happiness is attained, and how it is preserved. It is by trusting to things which change not—the word of God, the Son of God, and his promises; all which are in him, yea, made in him, and in him *amen*, fulfilled by him. May the Lord help thee simply to trust his word, and to live upon Christ for the fulfilling of it; and then thou wilt indeed get, what thou art now seeking in vain, a comfortable frame, and wilt be enabled to maintain it against all the discouragements of sense. To that end search the Scrip-

tures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation; and let it be thy daily request to the Lord, to make thee strong in faith, that thou mayest not stagger at his promises through unbelief, but mayest against hope believe in hope. Beg of him, when sense goes contrary to the word, to enable thee still to believe it, and not to doubt of Christ's faithfulness to fulfil it; and ask for strength to walk every moment by faith, and not by sight. Thus the Lord will carry thee on safely and sweetly from faith to faith, till thou receive the end of thy faith, even the salvation of thy soul. May it be so. Amen. ROMANE.

There is a great fault among those who have fled to Christ's righteousness in justification, that they use to come forth from duties, as a stomach from a honeycomb. Ofttimes we make our liberty and access to God the ground of our acceptance; and according to the ebbings and flowings of our inherent righteousness, so doth the faith and confidence of justification ebb and flow. Christians, this ought not to be: in so doing, you make your own righteousness your righteousness before God; for when the want of satisfaction in your duties maketh you question your interest so often, is not the satisfaction of your minds in such duties made the ground of your pleading interest? Give you liberty and access, you can believe any thing; remove it, and you can believe nothing. Certainly this is a sandy foundation; you ought to build nothing on performances; you should be as vile in your own eyes, and think your nakedness as open, when you come nearest God, when you have most liveliness, as when he hideth his face, and duty withereth. Shall filthy rags be your ornament? No, Christians! be more acquainted with the unspotted righteousness of the immaculate Lamb of God, and find as great necessity of covering your cleanest duties with it, as your foulest faults; and thus shall you be kept still humble and vile in your own eyes, and have continual employment for Christ Jesus. Your best estate should not puff you up, and your worst estate should not cast you down; therefore be much in the search of the filthiness of your holy actions. *This* were a spiritual study, a noble discovery, to unbowel your duties, to divide them, and give unto God what is God's, and take

unto yourselves what is your own. The discovery of filthiness in them needeth not hinder his praise, and the discovery of grace in them needeth not mar your shame. God hath most glory when we have most shame; these two grow in just proportion: so much is taken from God, as is given to the creature. **PROZ. BINNING.**

There are seasons, when there appears a reality, a life, and a warmth, in our religion. Our love is ardent, our faith steadfast, our hope towering. Our mountain stands strong; and then we say that we shall never be moved, that emotions so deep and powerful must be lasting. But let a few days, or perhaps only a few hours, pass away, and what is our language then? *The Lord hath hid his face from us, and we are troubled.* All our lively feelings are gone. Our soaring hopes are changed into gloomy apprehensions, our glowing joys into a most distressing coldness. We still make a Christian profession; but we look into ourselves, and can see little or nothing there, which warrants it, nothing, which distinguishes the sanctified from the worldly heart.

Now this painful experience, should caution us against attaching too much importance to lively frames and feelings. When we enjoy them, it should teach us to expect their departure; when we are destitute of them, to remember that by prayer and renewed application to Christ they may yet return; and, at all times, it should lead us to be fearful of making them, in any degree, the grounds of our dependence; to consider them as the gifts of a divine Comforter, designed to refresh, but not to puff up the Christian; to encourage his exertions, but not to make him trust in them; to give him strength, not to lead him to forget his weakness; to enable him to glory in the cross of Christ, not to give him reason to imagine, that he no longer needs the sprinkling of the blood that stained it. **REV. C. BRADLEY.**

We do not live by feeling, but by faith. It is the privilege of a Christian to begin with faith, and so to rise up to feeling. You would begin with feeling, and so come down to faith; but you must begin with faith, and so rise up to feeling. And I pray tell me, is it not sufficient to be as our Master was? Did not Christ want the sense of God's love, when he said, *My*

*God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* Yea, had not Christ the sense of God's anger upon him, when he performed the greatest act of obedience that ever the sun saw? Yet did he then say, I am not the child of God, because I want the sense of God's love, and am under the sense of God's anger? No, but with the same breath that he said he was forsaken, he said, *My God, my God;* and at the same time he called God Father: *Father, forgive them, &c.* So may you do. Though God hath forsaken you, though you want the sense of his love, yea, and are under the sense of God's anger, yet at the same time you may say, the Lord is my Father; and you may go to him as your Father. And if you can say, God is my Father, have you any reason for your discouragements? Yet how often are God's own people discouraged and cast down! O! you who are the disciples of Christ, labour more and more to follow your Master; and as David said, so do you often say, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?*

**REV. W. BRIDGE.**

It is possible, yea, too common for gracious souls to be reduced to a very low ebb, both of graces and comforts; how low I will not say. Grace, indeed, cannot be totally intermitted, nor finally lost; but there may be an omission of the act, even though there be not an omission of the habit. Certain it is, one that, like Paul, has been transported with joy, even to the third heavens, and cried, *I am more than a conqueror; who shall separate me from the love of Christ?* may, at another time, lie mourning, as at the gates of death, crying, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* One that has walked in sweet communion with God, rejoicing in the light of his countenance, may afterwards *walk in darkness, and see no light.* He who has cast anchor within the veil, and rode securely in the peaceful harbour of assurance, may seem to feel his anchor of hope lost, and go adrift into the stormy ocean again, crying with the Church, *My hope is perished from the Lord.* His calm and clear air may be overcast and clouded, yea, filled with storms and tempests, lightnings and thunders. His graces, like under-ground flowers in the winter, may all disappear, and hide their beautiful heads. To God he may say, *I am cast*

*out of thy sight. I know thou canst do much, but wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?* To the promises he may say, 'You are sweet things indeed, but what have I to do with you? I could once, indeed, rejoice in you as my portion; but now I fear that I grasped a shadow, a fancy, instead of you.' To saints he may say, 'Turn away from me; labour not to comfort me. O do not spill your precious ointment of consolation upon my head; for what have I to do with comfort?' To former experiences he may say in his haste, 'You are all liars.' To the light of God's countenance he may say, 'Farewell, sweet light, I shall behold thee no more.' To Satan he may say, 'O mine enemy, thou hast at last prevailed against me; thou art stronger than I, and hast overcome.' To duties and ordinances he may say, 'Where is the sweetness I once found in you? You were once sweeter to me than the honeycomb; but now tasteless.' O sad relapse! deplorable change!

But will God leave his poor creatures helpless in such a case as this? Shall their leaf fall, their branches wither, their joy, their life, their hearts depart? Will he see their graces fainting, their hopes expiring, the things that are in them ready

to die, and will he not regard it? He will regard it. *There is hope of a tree if it be cut down, and the root thereof was old in the earth, yet by the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant,* Job xiv. 8. This poor declining soul, though it sit thus sad at the gates of hell, may rouse up itself at last, and say to Satan, who stands triumphing over it, *Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, for though I fall, yet I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me,* Micah vii. 8. He may raise up himself upon the bed of languishing, and say to God, 'Though thou hast chastened me sore, yet hast thou not given me over unto death.' He may turn about to the saints who have mourned for him, and with a lightsome countenance say, 'I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.' He may say to the promises, 'You are the true and faithful sayings of God. My unbelief did belie you; I said in my haste you were liars, but I am ashamed of my folly. Surely, O soul, there is yet hope in thine end; thou mayest be restored; thou mayest yet recover thy verdure, and thy dew be as the dew of herbs.'

FLAVEL.

## SECTION II.—ON FAITH.

### *Difference between a life of Faith and a life of Sense.*

WHAT is the difference between the life of faith, and the life of sight or sense? The words of the Apostle give ground for this inquiry, when he informs us, that while in the body, *we walk by faith, and not by sight*; and that *the life he lived in the flesh, was a life of faith upon the Son of God*, 2 Cor. v.: by which he plainly intimates, that a life of faith is calculated for an embodied state, and that a life of sight and sense, is not suited unto our present condition here in the wilderness. There are these few things I offer to clear the difference.

1. Sense regards only what a man hath in hand, or presently enjoys; but faith looks to what a man hath in Christ, and in the well-ordered covenant. Sense is like a child that is better pleased with a

penny, or any little trifle the parent gives it, than if he were giving it a charter to the whole estate; but faith, although it will not despise any thing that comes from the hand of the Father, yet it is particularly taken up with the charter of the promise or covenant, and the estate lying in the hand of the great covenant head, Christ Jesus; it views the promise as it is *yea and amen in Christ*; it views the covenant as confirmed by his death and blood, and says, with David, *This is all my salvation that he hath made with me*, in my new covenant head, *an everlasting covenant, well ordered in all things and sure*.

2. Sense is ready to judge of the love of God by the aspect of Providence, or his present carriage; and whenever he seems to frown or hide, it razes all to the foundation, crying, *The Lord hath forgotten to be gracious*; but faith reads the love of God in the face of Christ Jesus, in the ac-

ceptance that the Surety has met with, and in the declarations, offers, promises, of the word: *In his word will I hope*, says faith; *Remember the word upon which thou hast caused thy servant to hope*. Hence it follows,

3. Sense and sight is a variable and fluctuating thing; but faith is steady and fixed, like Abraham, *who against hope believed in hope, and staggered not at the promise through unbelief*. While the believer lives by sense, and enjoys the Lord in a sensible manner, he is ready then to say, *My mountain stands firm, I shall never be removed*; but anon the Lord *hides his face*, and the man is *troubled*: but faith keeps up a persuasion of his love, even when he is withdrawn, saying, *Though I walk in darkness, I will trust in the name of the Lord, and stay myself upon my God*.

4. Sight and sense look only to things present: but faith, like a prophet, looks at things to come, things that are at a distance. Abraham, the father of the faithful, saw the day of Christ afar off: *Faith is the evidence of things not seen, and the substance of things hoped for*. When under darkness of affliction, desertion, temptation, it will say, *Though I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me: he will bring me forth to the light, and I shall behold his righteousness*.

5. Sense and sight are superficial and overly, in their views of things, and easily deceived with appearances: but faith is a poring and diving grace, it goes deep into things. Faith will perceive poison in a cup of gold, it will see lions' dens and leopards in Lebanon, among trees and woods of aromatic scent; and therefore will turn away from them as dangerous, while sense is easily encouraged thereby: and on the other hand it will see a paradise of communion with the Lord in a wilderness, where sense can perceive nothing but prickling briars and thorns. *Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*, 2 Cor. iv. 17.

6. They differ in their consort and order. Faith is the leader, and sense the follower; faith is the duty, and sense the privilege connected with it. *After that ye believed, ye were sealed with the holy Spirit of promise*, Eph. i. 12, 13. *Said I not unto thee, that if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?* John xi. 40. Faith

is the work, and sense is the encouragement. This is God's order, which the legal heart would always invert: we would be at the encouragement of sense, before we set about the duty of believing; like Thomas, John xx. 25, *Except I thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe*. But let us remember what Christ says to him, *Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*.

7. Sense is hasty and precipitant in its judgment; but faith is patient, and waits till it see the end. Sense draws rash and hasty conclusions when difficulties cast up: *I said in my haste, all men are liars: I said I am cast out of thy sight*. But faith waits till the other side of the cloud cast up: *The Lord is a God of judgment*, says faith; *and blessed are all they that wait for him*. *The vision is for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry*; hence, *He that believeth, shall not make haste*. The Old Testament saints waited about four thousand years for the coming of the promised seed of the woman; and when they died, they died with the promise in their arms, waiting for the accomplishment, believing that he would come, and would not tarry beyond the fulness of time. *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them*, Heb. xi. 13.

8. A life of sense is dangerous, but a life of faith is sure and safe. The danger of sense appears from the advantage that Satan took to ruin Adam and all his posterity. Had our first parents lived in the steady faith of God's promise and threatening in the covenant of works, they had never eaten of the forbidden tree; but they walked by sight and sense: the fruit was beautiful to the eye, and pleasant to the taste; this made them the more easily to listen to the hisses of the old serpent, saying, *If ye eat, ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*; and thus he prevailed. We see that when Paul was filled with sensible manifestations, being rapt up to the third heaven, he was in danger of being lifted up with pride. But now, I say, the life of faith is safe and sure; and the reason is, because it will neither believe angels nor men, if their say does not agree with what God says in his word. It views things as they are laid in the re-

velation, and forms a judgment and estimate of things according to God's verdict of them: *To the law and to the testimony*, says faith: *if they speak not according to God's oracles, it is because there is no truth in them*. Hence faith has the moon under its feet.

This is the victory whereby we overcome the world, even our faith. Faith by going this way to work, makes the soul like mount Zion, which cannot be removed for ever. *Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established*, says the prophet unto trembling Israel.

9. Sense has its only foundation and confidence within; it trades in the shallow waters of created grace, experimental attainments, marks of grace, and the like: but faith has its foundation without the man, in Christ, in God's covenant, in the great and precious promises. While the mariner stays in the shallow waters, he is in continual fear of rocks and sand-banks; but when he has launched out into the deep waters he is safe. Faith trades in the deep waters of the fullness of the Godhead that dwells bodily in Christ, *made of God unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*: and so it gets above doubts and racking fears of shipwreck: but it is, I say, otherwise with sense; it deals with created grace, manifestation, experiences, and attainments.

REV. EBEN. ERSKINE.

*Mistakes concerning Faith, both in the converted and the unconverted.*

THERE is a twofold mistake concerning faith: on the one side, they that are altogether void of it, abusing and flattering themselves in a vain opinion that they have it; and, on the other side, they that have it, misjudging their own condition, and so depriving themselves of much comfort and sweetness that they might find in their believing.

The former is the worse, and yet by far the commoner evil. What Seneca says of wisdom is true of faith, 'Many would seek after it, and attain it, if they did not falsely imagine that they have attained it already.' There is nothing more contrary to the lively nature of faith, than for the soul not to be at all busied with the thoughts of its own spiritual condition; and yet, this very character of unbelief passes with a great many for believing. They doubt not, that is, indeed they consider

not what they are; their minds are not at all on these things; are not awakened to seek diligently after Jesus, so as not to rest till they find him. They are well enough without him; it suffices them to hear there is such a one, but they ask not themselves, is he mine, or no? Surely, if that be all—not to doubt, the brutes believe as well as they. It were better, out of all question, to be labouring under doubtings, if it be a more hopeful condition, to find a man groaning and complaining, than speechless, and breathless, and not stirring at all.

There be in spiritual doubtings two things; there is a solicitous care of the soul concerning its own estate, and a diligent inquiry into it, and that is laudable, being a true work of the Spirit of God; but the other thing in them is, perplexity and distrust arising from darkness and weakness in the soul. Where there is a great deal of smoke, and no clear flame, it argues much moisture in the matter, yet it witnesseth certainly that there is fire there; and therefore, dubious questioning of a man concerning himself, is a much better evidence than that senseless deadness which most take for believing. Men that know nothing in sciences, have no doubts. He never truly believed who was not made first sensible and convinced of unbelief. This is the Spirit's first errand in the world, to *convince it of sin*; and the sin is this, that *they believe not*, John xvi. 8, 9. If the faith that thou hast, grew out of thy natural heart of itself, be assured it is but a weed. The right plant of faith is always set by God's own hand, and it is watered and preserved by him; because exposed to many hazards, he watches it night and day. *I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day*, Isa. xxvii. 3.

Again, how impudent is it in the most to pretend they believe, while they wallow in profaneness! If faith unite the soul unto Christ, certainly it puts it into participation of his Spirit; *for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, says St. Paul. This faith in Christ brings us into communion with God. Now, *God is light*, says St. John; and he therefore infers, *If we say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth*, 1 John i. 6. The lie appears in our practice, an unsuitableness in our carriage; as one said of him that

signed his verse wrong, 'Fecit solœcismum manu.'

But there be imaginary believers who are a little more refined, who live after a blameless, yea, and a religious manner, as to their outward behaviour, and yet are but appearances of Christians, have not the living work of faith within, and all these exercises are *dead works* in their hands. Amongst these, some may have such motions within them as may deceive themselves, while their external deportment deceives others; they may have some transient touches of desire to Christ, upon the unfolding of his excellences in the preaching of the word, and upon some conviction of their own necessity, and may conceive some joy upon thoughts of apprehending him; and yet all this proves but a vanishing fancy, an embracing of a shadow. And because men who are thus deluded, meet not with Christ indeed, do not really find his sweetness, therefore, within a while, they return to the pleasures of sin, and *their latter end proves worse than their beginning*, 2 Pet. ii. 20. Their hearts could not possibly be steadfast, because there was nothing to fix them on in all that work wherein Christ himself was wanting.

But the truly believing soul that is brought unto Jesus Christ, and fastened upon him by God's own hand, abides stayed on him, and departs not. And in these persons, the very belief of the things that are spoken concerning Christ in the Gospel, the persuasion of divine truth, is of a higher nature than the common consent that is called historical; they have another knowledge and evidence of the *mysteries of the kingdom*, than natural men can have. This is indeed the ground of all, the very thing that causes a man to rest upon Christ, when he hath a persuasion wrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, that Christ is an able Redeemer, a sufficient Saviour, *able to save all that come to him*, Heb. vii. 25. Then, upon this, the heart resolves upon that course; seeing I am persuaded of this, that *whoso believes in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life*, (or, as it is 1 Pet. ii. 6. *shall not be confounded*) I am to deliberate no longer; this is the thing I must do, I must lay my soul upon him, upon one who is an Almighty Redeemer; and it does so. Now, these first actings of faith have in themselves an evidence that distinguishes

them from all that is counterfeit, a light of their own, by which the soul wherein they are, may discern them, and say, This is the right work of faith; especially when God shines upon the soul, and clears it in the discovery of his own work within it.

And further, they may find the influence of faith upon the affections, *purifying* them, as the Apostle says of it, Acts xv. 9. Faith knits the heart to a holy Head, a pure Lord, the Spring of purity, and therefore cannot choose but make it pure: it is a beam from heaven, that raises the mind to a heavenly temper. Although there are remains of sin in a believing soul, yet it is a hated wearisome guest there. It exists there, not as its delight, but as its greatest grief and malady, which it is still lamenting and complaining of; it had rather be rid of it than gain a world. Thus the soul is purified from the love of sin.

So then, where these are—a spiritual apprehension of the promises, a cleaving of the soul unto Christ, and such a delight in him as makes sin vile and distasteful, so that the heart is set against it, and, as the needle touched with the loadstone, is still turned towards Christ, and looks at him in all estates,—the soul that is thus disposed, hath certainly interest in him; and, therefore, ought not to affect a humour of doubting, but to conclude, that how unworthy soever in itself, yet being in him, *it shall not be ashamed*; not only it shall never have cause to think shame of him, but all its just cause of shame in itself shall be taken away; it shall be covered with his righteousness, and appear so before the Father. Who must not think, if my sins were to be set in order, and appear against me, how would my face be filled with shame! Though there were no more, if some thoughts that I am guilty of were laid to my charge, I were utterly ashamed and undone. Oh! there is nothing in myself but matter of shame, but yet in Christ there is more matter of glorying, who endured shame, that we might not be ashamed. We cannot distrust ourselves enough, nor trust enough in him. Let it be right faith, and there can be no excess in believing. Though I have sinned against him and abused his goodness, yet I will not leave him, *for whither should I go?* He, and none but he, *hath the words of eternal life*. Yea, though he being so often offended, should threaten to leave

me to the shame of my own follies, yet I will stay by him, and wait for a better answer, and I know I shall obtain it; this assurance being given me for my comfort, that *whosoever believes in him shall not be ashamed.* LEIGHTON.

### *Our need of Faith continual.*

FAITH it is which leads the soul to God, and fetches strength from him under every new trial and emergency; there is no living upon past frames or past mercies; a receiving life is what every believer lives: *And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace,* John i. 16. There must be a daily coming to Christ for grace to help in time of need: *To whom coming, as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,* 1 Pet. ii. 4;—to him coming for support, strength, subsistence; faith is one continued act in the soul, it is our daily, our hourly work; our life is in another, not in ourselves; and how is this life maintained? even as animal life is, by spiritual communications from Christ, who is the *Bread of Life*, and the Rock who gives us drink, following us in the wilderness for this very end, 1 Cor. x. 3, 4: *And did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them, and that rock was Christ.* All the grace his elect should need to the end of time, was put into his hands, as their Covenant Head, and he was made trustee for it—2 Tim. i. 9: *Who hath saved and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.* Faith it is that receives that grace from Christ, whether it be pardon, righteousness, preparation for duty, strength under trials and temptations, peace, comfort, and the like. The Spirit shows the believer first what his needs are, and then directs him to Christ for the supply of them; faith takes hold of, receives, and applies what Christ gives, and so feeds, supports, and sustains the soul. Hence the same things that are spoken of Christ are applied to faith, Gal. ii. 20: *I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Never

can we say, *All is well*, when faith sinks: no; then *All these things are against me.* REV. J. HILL.

### *Difference between Faith and Presumption.*

PRESUMPTION is like faith in appearance, but in reality it is very unlike it. Presumption works this way: the presummer may have the mercy in his eye, but he hath no promise in his eye. Take heed to this. If there be strong desires after a mercy, and that mercy not pleaded for as in the promise, there is presumption in that pleading. The reason why believers ask so great things of God, is, because God hath promised so great things to them, 2 Sam. vii. 27. Hence it is that presumption acts ordinarily in pleading with God, not for the main spiritual blessings, but for some outward mercy, that their hearts may be too much set upon. It is about such that believers should watch against this presumptuous boldness. But if the pleading at the throne of grace be about salvation and spiritual blessings, the difference betwixt faith and presumption appears in this: presumption can never plead with God, neither in deep distress, nor in the view of sin; but it is the excellent property of faith, that it can plead with God in both cases—Psal. lxxv. 3: *Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away;* spoken like a believer: and, Psal. cxxx. 3, 4, *If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* (But can David stand? Yes, and he stands on this ground;) *but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayst be feared.* There is just cause to suspect that there is presumption in that man's heart, when his boldness is only kept up, when sin is out of sight, and disappears. A believer believes most humbly, and often most strongly, when his sinfulness and unworthiness is best seen: for true boldness of faith is not supported by any good or worth in us, but by what is in Christ. The boldness of faith cannot be entertained with *regarding of iniquity in the heart*, Psal. lxxvi. 18; 1 John iii. 20; yet it can, with the being and seeing of iniquity in both heart and life, Rom. vii. 24, 25; 1 Tim. i. 15. . . .

What then is the boldness allowed in coming to the throne of grace? It must not be an ignorant, peremptory boldness. What must it then be?

The boldness of faith hath this in general in it, that it is grounded and bottomed on somewhat without a man, and on nothing in him. It is grounded on Jesus Christ. It is a great mistake in Christians to think, that they cannot come to the throne of grace with boldness, because of the many infirmities in their hearts, and in their addresses. Your complaint may be just and true; but the inference is not good. Do you never, in your counting your infirmities, put in this great one amongst them in your confessions, the want of boldness of faith? for this boldness stands not in any thing in us, and done by us. We must not come boldly, because we can pray well, and plead hard; we must not think to be heard in heaven, neither because of our *much speaking*, nor well speaking, Matt. vi. 7, as the Pharisees did. The boldness of faith hath a higher, and more noble and firm foundation, even Jesus Christ.

REV. W. TRAILL.

Is it presumption for a child to obey his parents? No. Why? Because it is commanded. So it is commanded for a soul to believe, when all comforts are out of sight; and when he sees nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised. Presumption, properly, is the taking of a thing before it is given, or offered. But in this case the promise is given, and therefore it is no presumption to hold it fast. There is a two-fold presumption which you read of in Scripture; one whereby men rest upon their own works for salvation without Christ; so the Jews did, and therein they presumed upon mercy before it was given to them: another whereby men do as they think, or in their way, rest on Christ for salvation, and yet live without works and obedience: and therein they presume also, because they take mercy when it is not given to them. But if I rest on the promise, on Christ, that I may be made the more holy, and be fruitful in every good work, yet rest upon Christ for all; this is no presumption: Why? Because I do not take mercy before it is offered. And though I hold the promise fast, when I see nothing but what is contrary to the thing promised, yet this is no presumption: Why? Because I do what is commanded; for, says the Apostle, *let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful*

*Creator*, 1 Pet. iv. 19. Now creation-work is out of nothing; it is light out of darkness. Yet thus are we commanded to commit our souls unto God; and therefore though all fail, and we see nothing of the mercy promised, yet it is not presumption to hold and keep fast the promise.

REV. W. BRIDGE.

*The great enmity of carnal Reason to Faith.*

PAUL by these words, *Abraham believed*, of faith in God, maketh the chiefest worship, the chiefest duty, the chiefest obedience, and the chiefest sacrifice. Let him that is a rhetorician amplify this place, and he shall see that faith is an almighty thing, and that the power thereof is infinite and inestimable; for it giveth glory unto God, which is the highest service that can be given unto him. Now, to give glory unto God, is to believe in him, to count him true, wise, righteous, merciful, almighty; briefly, to acknowledge him to be the author and giver of all goodness. This reason doth not, but faith. That is it which maketh us divine people, and, as a man would say, it is the creator of certain divinity, not in the substance of God, but in us. For without faith God loseth in us his glory, wisdom, righteousness, truth, and mercy. To conclude: no majesty or divinity remaineth unto God, where faith is not. And the chiefest thing that God requireth of man is, that he giveth unto him his glory and his divinity: that is to say, that he taketh him not for an idol, but for God; who regardeth him, heareth him, sheweth mercy unto him, and helpeth him. This being done, God hath his full and perfect divinity, that is, he hath whatsoever a faithful heart can attribute unto him. To be able therefore to give that glory unto God, is the wisdom of wisdoms, the righteousness of righteousness, the religion of religions, and sacrifice of sacrifices. Hereby we may perceive what an high and excellent righteousness faith is, and so, by the contrary, what an horrible and grievous sin infidelity is.

Whosoever then believeth the word of God, as Abraham did, is righteous before God, because he hath faith, which giveth glory unto God; that is, he giveth to God that which is due to him. For faith saith thus, I believe thee, O God, when thou speakest. And what saith God? Impossible things, if ye believe reason. For what is more impossible, than when God



saith unto Abraham that he should have a son of the barren and dead body of his wife Sarah?

So, if we will follow the judgment of reason, God setteth forth absurd and impossible things, when he setteth out unto us the articles of the Christian faith. Indeed it seemeth to reason an absurd and a foolish thing, that in the Lord's supper is offered unto us the body and blood of Christ, that baptism is the laver of the new birth, and of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that the dead shall rise in the last day, that Christ the Son of God was conceived and carried in the womb of the Virgin Mary, that he was born, that he suffered the most reproachful death of the cross, that he was raised up again, that he now sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, and that he hath power both in heaven and in earth. For this cause Paul calleth the Gospel of Christ crucified, the word of the cross and foolish preaching (1 Cor. i. 18), which to the Jews was offensive, and to the Gentiles foolish doctrine. Wherefore reason doth not understand that to hear the word of God and to believe it, is the chiefest service that God requireth of us; but it thinketh that those things which it chooseth and doth of a good intent, as they call it, and of her own devotion, please God. Therefore when God speaketh, reason judgeth his word to be heresy, for it seemeth unto it absurd and foolish.

But faith killeth reason, and slayeth that beast which the whole world and all creatures cannot kill. So Abraham killed it by faith in the word of God, whereby seed was promised to him of Sarah, who was barren and now past child-bearing. Unto this word, reason yielded not straightway in Abraham, but it fought against faith in him, judging it to be an absurd, a foolish, and impossible thing, that Sarah, who was now not only ninety years old, but was also barren by nature, should bring forth a son. Thus faith wrestled with reason in Abraham: but herein faith got the victory, killed and sacrificed reason, that most cruel and pestilent enemy of God. So all the godly entering with Abraham into the darkness of faith do kill reason, saying, Reason, thou art foolish, thou dost not favour those things which belong unto God: therefore speak not against me, but hold thy peace. Judge not, but hear the word of God, and believe it. So the godly by faith kill such a

beast as is greater than the whole world, and thereby do offer to God a most acceptable sacrifice and service.

And in comparison of this sacrifice of the faithful, all the religions of all nations are nothing at all. For by this sacrifice, first, as I said, they kill reason, a great and mighty enemy of God. For reason despiseth God, denieth his wisdom, justice, power, truth, mercy, majesty, and divinity. Moreover, by the same sacrifice they yield glory unto God; that is, they believe him to be just, good, faithful, true, &c.; they believe that he can do all things, that all his words are holy, true, lively, and effectual, &c. which is a most acceptable obedience unto God. Wherefore there can be no greater or more holy religion in the world, nor more acceptable service unto God, than faith is.

Contrariwise, the justiciaries, and such as seek righteousness by their own works, lacking faith, do many things. They fast, they pray, they watch, they lay crosses upon themselves. But because they think to appease the wrath of God, and deserve grace by things, they give no glory to God, that is, they do not judge him to be merciful, true, and keeping promise, &c. but to be an angry judge, which must be pacified with works; and by this means they despise God, they make him a liar in all his promises, they deny Christ and all his benefits; to conclude, they thrust God out of his seat, and set themselves in his place. For they, rejecting and despising the word of God, do choose unto themselves such a service of God and such works as God hath not commanded. They imagine that God hath a pleasure therein, and they hope to receive a reward of him for the same. Therefore they kill not reason—that mighty enemy of God, but quicken it; and they take from God his majesty and his divinity, and attribute the same unto their own works. Wherefore only faith giveth glory unto God, as Paul witnesseth of Abraham: *Abraham, saith he, was made strong in the faith, and gave glory to God, being fully assured, that whatsoever God had promised he was able to perform, and therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness*, Rom. iv. 20—22.

LUTHER.

*The exercise of Faith on the Divine threatenings.*

Be persuaded that there are Gospel threatenings intended by Christ for the

use of believers. The laws of Christ must have penalties to enforce them ; and they that most believe them, will be most tenderly impressed by them. Christ says to his disciples, *Fear him, who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*, Matt. x. 28. And the Apostle exhorts his fellow-saints, *Let us fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it*, Heb. iv. 1. Even justifying and saving faith is much promoted by the belief of God's threatenings. For *by faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned*, Heb. xi. 7 ; Mark xvi. 16. Consider the salutary influence of divine threatenings, to glorify God, and engage us to obedience. We are ready to think hardly of God, when we read or hear of the dreadful torments of hell. But there is abundant reason why faith should not only be reconciled to them, but even love and honour, as well as fear God, on account of them. God warns us of them, to keep us from them. And though love must be the chief spring of our obedience, yet such is our nature, that fear must drive us, as well as love draw us. How important are divine threatenings, to keep the world in some tolerable order, and at once demonstrate the wisdom and goodness, the justice and holiness of divine government ? If any man should ask, Why will God make so terrible a law ? and at the same time should declare, as terrible as it is, I will venture on it, rather than leave my sensual pleasures to engage in a life of holiness ; such a one would contradict himself, by showing us that the law is not terrible enough to drive him from his abominable lusts.

Remember how Christ himself verified divine threatenings by his being a sacrifice for sin. *He was manifested to take away our sins, and destroy the works of the devil*, 1 John iii. 5. 8. Now the first and great work of the devil was, to represent God as a liar, and persuade Eve not to believe God's threatenings, and to tell her, that though she sinned, *ye shall not surely die*, Gen. iii. 4. Indeed God so far dispensed with the penalty, as to forgive man the greatest part of it, by laying it on the

Redeemer, that his cross might openly confute the tempter, and assure the world that God is just, and that *the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*, Rom. vi. 23.

Make use of divine threatenings to quicken you to duty, and to strengthen you against temptations. When a temptation is set before you, set hell against it, as well as heaven ; and say, Can I take this cup, gratify this lust, grasp at this preferment, together with hell, instead of a part in heaven. If men threaten death, imprisonment, or any other penalty ; remember that God threatens hell, which is infinitely more to be dreaded, *where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*, Mark ix. 44. In proportion as love to God, and hatred to sin, prevail in you, you will no more need divine threatenings, than an affectionate wife needs to be forbid to abuse her husband. But the degrees of divine love are imperfect on earth, and therefore all men need to be quickened by the fear of divine threatenings. And thus *the law was not made for a righteous man* ; because he fears the threatenings of it, and so falls not under its condemnation.

Remember that all who profess Christianity, have consented to Gospel-threatenings. Every Christian professes to be governed by Christ, and consequently by his laws ; and by this law in particular, *He that believeth not, shall be damned ; as well as by that, He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved*. Christ requires your consent to both these laws, or to neither ; and why will you embrace the promise, and reject the threatenings, when they are so closely united, and when you yourselves have solemnly consented to both.

Observe that all saving faith contains in it a belief both of Christ's threatenings and promises. Not that all fear of divine threatenings is saving faith. But there are many serious Christians, who believe and tremble at the threatenings, and also truly believe the promises, and yet verily think that they only believe the threatenings, without believing the promises. It is nevertheless manifest, that they believe the promises, as well as the threatenings, because their faith works by love to God, and desire after holiness, and a full enjoyment of God. They would not once suspect their belief of the promises, at the same

time that they are confident of their belief of the threatenings, were it not for their mistaking the nature of true faith, in the manner we have formerly mentioned. Because they believe not that they themselves are pardoned and justified; therefore they think they have no faith in the promises. But though you doubt of your own sincerity, you are still persuaded of the truth of the promises. Now your doubting of your own sincerity, is rather a weakness in your hope, than in your faith; or rather the defect is chiefly in your self-acquaintance. Yet still be more mindful of divine promises, than threatenings. Let all your fear be exercised on the threatenings; but let that be only in order to the fuller exercise of your love, desire, and thankfulness upon the promises. And let your faith interpret all the judgments of God, merely as the threatenings of the Word of God shall direct. The judgments of God may be very dangerously misunderstood; and therefore draw no conclusions concerning them, but what are evidently Scriptural.

BAXTER.

#### *The Christian's Peace in Believing.*

Now when this peace, which is made up in heaven, is intimated unto the conscience, then all the tempests and clouds of it vanish; and this is the peace of believing, which is the soul's resting and quieting itself upon the believed favour of God. There may be a great calm above, *good-will in God towards men*, and yet great tempests in this lower region, no peace on earth. There is a peace of conscience, which is a disease of conscience, a benumbedness of conscience, or a sleep of conscience, when men walk in the imagination of their own hearts, and flatter themselves in their own eyes, will not trouble themselves with the apprehension of the wrath of God, when souls will not suffer their sin, or the curse to enter in. This is that *no peace*, which the Lord speaks often of, it is but a dream; and when a man awaketh, alas! what a dreadful sight meets he with first, sudden destruction! Sin enters in the conscience, and the law, the strength of sin; and so that peace endeth in an eternal disquietness: but what is the reason, that notwithstanding of God's justice and men's sins, so many are not afraid of him, so many pass the time without fear of wrath and hell? Is it not because they have taken hold on his strength and made peace

with him? No indeed, but because they know not the power of his anger, to fear him according to his wrath. Who will spend one hour in the examination of his own ways, in searching out sins, in counting his debt, till he find it past payment? No, men entertain the thoughts of sin, and hell and wrath, as if it were coals in their bosom, they shake them out, they like and love any diversion from them. Oh, ignorance maketh much peace, I would say security, which is so much worse than fear, because it is so far from the remedy, that it knoweth not the evil and danger. It is not the rising of the Sun of righteousness, shining into the soul that hath cleared them, but their perpetual darkness that blindeth them. I say then, in the name of Jesus Christ, that ye never knew the peace of God; who knew not war with God; ye know not love, who have not known anger; but this is the soul's true peace and tranquillity, when it is once awakened to see its misery and danger; how many clouds overspread it; what tempests blow; what waves of displeasure go over its head? But when that peace, which is made in the high places, breaketh through the cloud with a voice, *Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee*; when that voice of the Spirit is uttered, presently at its command the wind and waves obey; the soul is calmed, as the sea after a storm; it is not only untroubled, but it is peaceable upon solid grounds, because of the word which speaks peace in Christ.

PROF. BINNING.

#### *Faith our only support in Trials and Dangers.*

One thing then is clear, that *our support in dangers and trials depends on our faith*. Not that faith can do any thing of itself to help us; but this is the grace, which peculiarly honours God, and which he is therefore determined to cover with honour wherever he finds it. Other graces may be in some respects of a higher character; hope may be more elevating, and love more disinterested and lasting; but faith submits to God's authority: it lies low at his footstool; gives him there the credit of his faithfulness, his power, and his glory; and then it rises up, and nothing can withstand it. It overcomes the world with its manifold temptations. It smiles at dangers, triumphs over difficulties, rejoices in tribulation, and sings in persecution. Nay, it has controlled the elements,

and changed the course of nature; *subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, turned armies to flight, and raised the very dead to life.* It makes a man while living a wonder to all around him, and when he dies, it saves his soul.

When therefore, in the hour of trial, we renounce the aid of this mighty principle, we shall most certainly sink; the weakest temptation will overpower, the most trifling difficulty discourage, and the slightest danger alarm us. It matters not to what other means of support we may have recourse. We may reason wisely and even piously about our trials, and endeavour to fortify ourselves under them by recollecting all we have heard of the advantages of overcoming and the uselessness of yielding to them; but we shall find that our

fears will not be reasoned away; that the wisest arguments will not make trouble sit easy upon us, nor silence the murmurs of discontent, nor quiet an accusing conscience. Before these effects can be produced, we must discover a more simple and a more powerful instrument of consolation; and where is this to be found? Only in that Gospel, where we are most unwilling to look for it. Other things may keep us thoughtless and hardened in our trials; but we can be made peaceful under them only by a heart-felt belief in the Bible; by that faith, which the men of the world have agreed to misunderstand and despise, but the cheering energy of which thousands of the afflicted children of God are hourly experiencing. *By faith they live; by faith they stand; by faith they walk; by faith they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* REV. C. BRADLEY.

### SECTION III.—CAUTIONS AND INSTRUCTIONS TO THE CHRISTIAN.

*Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus,* Phil. iii. 12.

ST. PAUL is conscious that Christ has apprehended him; he knows for certain he has apprehended him, yet he follows after to attain; fully sensible that he is very imperfect at present; but he continues doing this one thing as the business of life, even looking steadily to heaven, to Jesus sitting at the right hand of God, to the resurrection of the just, and to a happy and glorious immortality.

From this view of the Apostle's frame of heart, some useful caution and advice may be given to thriving Christians. . . .

Your knowledge, brethren, of your own heart; your care and watchfulness against sin; your earnest desire to please God; joined with the experience of your daily imperfections, will be apt to cast you down, if you be not fortified with just views of the grace of God, and your privileges and real situation as his children. This evil is more to be feared when the malice and subtlety of Satan's devices are taken into the account, against which you are not always sufficiently on your guard. I never

knew a serious Christian, but he was disposed to think that after a course of years he would have been further advanced in holiness than he actually finds himself to be. The fact is, he is, as before, still a sinner; he follows after; he strives; he has an idea of apprehending that for which Christ has apprehended him: sometimes he seems just on the point of having attained it; he seems to be filled with all the fulness of God, and swallowed up with divine love. But,—so it is;—his brightest attainment, even the precious heaven of communion with Christ, is often taken out of his sight, just when he is going to enter, as it were, into full possession. This is his experience through life, so that he never completely hits the mark at which he aims. The flesh weighs him down; some ensnaring temptation intervenes; his sun is clouded; his faith, when strongest, is liable to be assaulted; his hope, when most cheerful and lively, is damped from time to time; and his love has its weaknesses, its declensions, and variations. The flesh mixes itself so continually with all his best experiences and exercises, that no dispositions, no frames, no works whatever, even the very best of them, in his best state on earth, are, properly speaking, perfect. Nay, this is the case with the

most perfect, that is, the most sincere Christians, in whom the principle of grace is the strongest that it is likely to be, on this side of eternity.

Nevertheless I dare not withhold from such the consolation which the Scripture exhibits. I know how needful it is for their growth, their liberty, their thankfulness to God, and their honouring of their Saviour. Brethren, go on with St. Paul; confess humbly, to your own shame, and with an entire renunciation of your own righteousness, that you have not attained nor are perfect. But follow on to apprehend, as he did, that for which Christ apprehended you. Oh! consider what glory, what bliss, what sweetness of enjoyment is before you! You shall in truth apprehend the whole. There is a glorious liberty of the children of God, and a putting off of the bondage of corruption, as you are told in the eighth chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Doubt not, but earnestly believe that it shall not always be thus. In this life you must hope for that which you see not, and in patience wait for it. St. Paul uses the expression, *Waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of your body*. And the same Apostle tells you in the same chapter, that in this life, the Spirit helps your infirmities, and you must bear the warfare till he call you hence. You may with comfort look forward to that glorious hope. Then Christ and you shall be so perfectly united, that you shall never more have any thing to do with sinful flesh; but love shall fill you without interruption for ever.

This is the Scripture view. It carries the mind directly forward to the next life; and not in vain, for your title is firm and sure, not grounded on your own righteousness, but on Christ; not on what measures of grace you attain, but on *the gift of God, which is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. By faith apply to your High Priest, and his cleansing blood, and most precious intercession, all your days, and you will still have solid peace. Use all means against sin, your most deadly foe. But, *if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins*. The most upright saints have no other dependence than this: fear not to trust to it; and fail not to profit by it.

REV. JOS. MILNER.

### *The Saint's Imperfections.*

WHILE I am in the flesh, I must be encompassed with many infirmities: and while I am in the world, I cannot escape trial and temptation. These things are grievous to my spirit; but I see that they are permitted to wean me from myself, and to draw off my heart from the creatures to my only true refuge in God.

What feebleness, at times, do I not feel in duty; what fickleness and unsteadiness in following my Redeemer; what dulness and distraction in prayer; so that I can hardly remain firm and lively, long together, in the pursuit of that good which my soul most desires and approves. It is a war indeed in my members to get my corrupted nature down, and to have the life of grace warm and vigorous within me. I cannot but groan, at times, in this tabernacle, being burdened and almost oppressed by the evils within and about me.

Were it not for divine help, O what should I do? Like Peter, on the sea, I have sometimes ventured boldly after my Lord; but like him too, through faintness of heart and weakness of faith, at other times, I have cried out, *Lord, save, or I perish!* Thou hast helped me indeed, blessed be thy name, O my God: and yet I cannot but reproach myself for the cold forgetfulness and weakness of my spirit, in doubting so often of thy faithfulness, and in not keeping hold of thy promises.

Thus, Lord, I feel myself a poor, a frail, and altogether a weak and worthless man, fit for nothing but thy mercy, and capable of nothing when left to my own nature, but rebellion against it. When I survey myself, and all my confused and ruined faculties, I am filled with shame, and cannot but wonder at thy long-suffering towards me. O wretch that I am, in what a vile body of sin do I live! How am I always struggling against thee with my perverse and wicked flesh, contrary to the true and lasting interests of my soul? How ready to yield to thine enemy and mine; or to give up all for lost rather than maintain the hard and painful struggle with corruption and sin?

When I have been lively and zealous for my God, how often have I been ready to overlook, to misapply, or to turn his grace to the foolish vanity of my own mind? Insomuch, at times, I seem all flesh to myself, and to have neither true

light, life, wisdom, nor strength from above within me. My failures are and have been so numerous, the apostacy of my heart so great, the conduct of my life and temper so immutable and irregular, and all my frame so poor, and wavering, so cold and weak in embracing the best things, that I am ready to bemoan with the Prophet, *Woe is me, for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips! My whole head is sick, and my whole heart is faint.*

Others may talk of their wills and their powers, their duties and their deserts; but, as for me, I can scarcely lift up my eyes to heaven when I consider myself: rather with the publican my brother, I must smite upon my breast and say, *God be merciful to me a sinner!* Instead of looking on myself as a fine holy creature, who can appear confidently before my God, I shrink with contrition and shame at the thought that I have done little else than dishonour him all my days, and deserve nothing for the best thing I was ever able to do, but confusion and sorrow.

O what plague is discovered in a man's own heart, when he knows himself; and how little doth he appear in his own eyes, when he hath been made to view, in some true light and degree, the piercing purity and perfections of God.

And yet, O marvellous to say, God is pleased, by all the weak and contrary things in me, to magnify his own power and glory. By these he makes me out of humour with myself; by these he drives me from a thousand refuges of lies; by these he compels me to cleave unto him, as my only rock, succour, and remedy. In this way I can feel, as well as read, what the Apostle meant where he says, *Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; for when I am weak, then I am strong.* These are strange paradoxes to the natural heart; but blessed is the man who can truly understand and enter into their sweet sense and experience.

ANB. SERLE.

#### *The Saint's Sense of Corruption.*

I BELIEVE, that I was conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity; and that ever since, I have been continually conceiving mischief and bringing forth vanity.

This article of my faith I must of necessity believe whether I will or not, for if I could not believe it to be true, I should

therefore have the more cause to believe it to be so; because, unless my heart was naturally very sinful and corrupt, it would be impossible for me not to believe that which I have so much cause continually to bewail; or, if I do not bewail it, I have still the more cause to believe it, and therefore am so much the more persuaded of it, by how much the less I find myself affected with it. For certainly I must be a hard-hearted wretch indeed, steeped in sin and fraught with corruption to the highest, if I know myself so oft to have incensed the wrath of the most high God against me, as I do, and yet not be sensible of my natural corruption, nor acknowledge myself to be by nature a child of wrath, as well as others; for I verily believe, that the want of such a due sense of myself argues as much original corruption, as murder and whoredom do actual pollution. And I shall ever suspect those to be the most under the power of that corruption, that labour most by arguments to divest it of its power.

And therefore, for my own part, I am resolved, by the grace of God, never to go about to confute that by wilful arguments, which I find so true by woful experience. If there be not a bitter root in my heart, whence proceeds so much bitter fruit in my life and conversation? Alas! I can neither set my head nor heart about any thing, but I still show myself to be the sinful offspring of sinful parents, by being the sinful parent of a sinful offspring; nay, I do not only betray the inbred venom of my heart by poisoning my common actions, but even my most religious performances also, with sin. I cannot pray, but I sin; I cannot hear or preach a sermon, but I sin; I cannot give an alms or receive the sacrament, but I sin; nay, I cannot so much as confess my sins, but my very confessions are still aggravations of them, my repentance needs to be repented of, my tears want washing, and the very washing of my tears needs still to be washed over again with the blood of my Redeemer. Thus not only the worst of my sins, but even the best of my duties, speak me a child of Adam. Inasmuch that whensoever I reflect upon my past actions, methinks I cannot but look upon my whole life, from the time of my conception to this very moment, to be but as one continued act of sin.

And whence can such a continued stream

of corruption flow, but from the corrupt cistern of my heart? And whence can that corrupt cistern of my heart be filled, but from the corrupt fountain of my nature? Cease therefore, O my soul, to gainsay the power of original sin within thee, and labour now to subdue it under thee. But why do I speak of my subduing this sin myself? Surely this would be both an argument of it, and an addition to it. It is to thee, O my God, who art both the searcher and cleanser of hearts, that I desire to make my moan! It is to thee I cry out in the bitterness of my soul, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Who shall? Oh! who can do it, but thyself? Arise thou therefore, O my God, and show thyself as infinitely merciful in the pardoning, as thou art infinitely powerful in the purging away my sins! BP. BEVERIDGE.

*The Decrits of Self even in our most spiritual Exercises.*

As they that are in the flesh, cannot please God at all; so they, that follow the flesh in any instance, do so far displease him. This flesh is a subtle adversary, and will creep into our duties as well as our sins; mixing itself under a thousand forms into almost all that we can say, or think, or do.

Who could expect to feel this deceiver in the deepest contrition of the soul, or to find him in peals of groans and showers of tears? Yet self will endeavour to make a man proud of this very humility, be plumed upon his own abasements, and be fancying himself something in the midst of his confessions about his vileness and nothing.

A poor soul shall own itself, with much pain and sincerity, to be a miserable sinner; and self, from this very acknowledgment, will stir up a notion of worth in the creature, and give it to believe that there are some seeds at least of excellency within itself, which others have not, and for having of which he is higher or better than they. Self will bid some men confess themselves sinners, that they may be considered as saints. To take them at their word, would mortify and displease them.

When the heart of the believer is melted in duty, and enjoys the liveliest frame of communion and love; how often and how much is self to be found therein, either attempting to puff up with an high opinion,

or to instil a carnal security concerning its spiritual interest and welfare? If it can abate the power and watchfulness of faith, it will lay a ground of distress to the believer in the next trial; so that he will soon find himself to be yet in the flesh, and that, as one says, 'He must never think to put off his armour till he is ready for others to put on his shroud.'

A man may appear excellent in religious conversation, and be eminent in public duties: he may speak and write much, and perhaps well, upon the things of God, and may recommend them with zeal to others; and yet, so much of self may be in all, that when he looks over his heart and discovers it, he will rather find reason to be ashamed of the whole, than to be satisfied with any one part of it.

In success of duty for God, and in being the instrument of good to others, this selfishness of our hearts will endeavour, if not to rob God entirely of his glory, yet at least to share with him in it. Self will be pleased, because we ourselves have been concerned, because we have been honoured, and because by us the Lord hath been magnified in the souls of others. It is self which is vexed when this is not the case, and when we have toiled for nothing, or others have caught the fishes. Whereas our spirit should rejoice in the will of the Lord, and be as much pleased when his work prospers in other hands, as in our own. And thus indeed they would rejoice, if this corrupt self did not mix with and seek its own establishment in the most spiritual exercises of our souls. We too much forget, that we are only instruments, and that we can do no more of ourselves for God, than our pens can write down our thoughts, when not taken up by our hands.

All this may serve to shew, what a severe jealousy we should hold concerning ourselves. We should not only pray, but watch unto prayer; we should both perform our religious duties with zeal, and should examine well the zeal with which we perform them; we should abound in every work and labour of love, and should entreat for wisdom and grace, that flesh and self may not abound in them too; we should ask again and again for a single eye and a simple heart, that all the glory of every good may be given to God, its right owner; and that we may be kept in our true place, admiring

his mercy, and shewing forth, with humble simplicity, his honour and praise.

AMB. SERLE.

*The more Grace we have the deeper our sense of Sin.*

HE who is possessed of the greatest portion of grace, is the most clearly convinced of the height to which his affections should ascend, and is the most deeply affected with the low degree in which they are exercised. And therefore, estimating his love by the extent of his obligation, he is astonished at its smallness.

The eminent saint, having such a view of the high degree in which he ought to love God, perceives more clearly, not only the smallness of his grace, but the greatness of his remaining corruption. In order to ascertain how much depravity, or sin remains within us, we must regard that height to which the rule of our duty extends; the whole of the distance between that elevation, and our affections is sin, for in exact proportion as we fall short of our duty, we sin, and evidence the depravity of our hearts. Sin is an abominable defect, and appears so to the saints, especially to those who are eminent saints. . . .

And the more a person possesses of true grace and spiritual light, the more will he feel his infinite deformity as a sinner, and the want of moral beauty in his graces and experience. Indeed, our goodness, comparatively, is less than a drop in the ocean, for finite bears no proportion to infinite; and the more spiritual light we possess, the more do things appear, in this respect, as they really are. Hence it is evident, that true grace is of such a nature, that the more a person possesses of it, the less does his moral beauty appear in comparison with his deformity.

The tendency of high religious affections, in some persons with whom I have been acquainted, is to hide the depravity of their hearts, and to leave them without complaint as to the remains of moral depravity. This is a certain proof that their discoveries, as they call them, proceed from darkness and not from light. It is true, that saving discoveries may, for the present, hide depravity, as they restrain its positive exercises. They do, however, bring it to light as to what is privative,—our want of love, of humility, of gratitude, &c. These defects appear most hateful in

the view of those who are most eminently gracious; and whatever positive effects of depravity at any time appear, and mingle themselves with the actings of grace, they will, from these circumstances, be exceedingly magnified, and rendered far more detestable.

I would not, however, be understood to mean that the saints on earth have, in all respects, the worst opinion of themselves, when they possess most of the exercise of grace. In many respects the case is otherwise. As to the positive effects of depravity, it will be evident to the real Christian, that he is freest from them when grace is most in exercise, and least so when the actings of grace are most feeble. And when he compares his experience at one time, with his experience at another, he will be convinced that when grace is in lively exercise, it is better with him than when he is in a dull and languid frame. When he sinks in the frame of his mind, he will be sensible of the declension, and thus have a striking proof of his remaining depravity. But still it is evident from the considerations already mentioned, that the children of God never have such spiritual views of their deformity and vileness, as when they possess most of the exercise of true grace; and are never so much disposed to place themselves low amongst Christians, as when they are living near to God. Thus he who is greatest in the kingdom of Christ, is the least in his own estimation, Matt. xviii. 4.

PRES. EDWARDS.

*Sin can never be forgotten by pardoned Sinners.*

THERE are men who contend that pardoned sin should be forgotten. They know no more of the power of godliness than a stone. It can never be forgotten. As soon as it is cancelled in heaven, it is written with a pen of iron, fixed in the memory for ever. The murderer may forget his crimes, Judas his treason, and all hell its rebellion; but as long as the pardoned have minds that can work, and hearts that can feel, not all the sorrows of life, nor all the joys of heaven, nor all the ages of eternity, can blot out the remembrance of their guilt or weaken its power. It is as lasting as pardon itself. A sense of pardon keeps it alive. A man never rightly feels himself a sinner, till he looks with an eye of faith on Christ as his Saviour; till he be-



gins to hope that wrath is escaped and heaven won.

*Then shall ye remember your own evil ways and your doings that were not good,* says the Lord to Israel. And when was this remembrance to begin? Not till he had *saved them from all their uncleanness*; not till he had said to them, *Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.*

Look at the prodigal. *When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.* And what was the effect of all this tenderness? The very effect which the enjoyment of redeeming love produces in every breast. The first words which came from that contrite rebel, were a confession of his guilt. The son said unto him, *Father, I have sinned against heaven and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.*

And look higher. Why is that new song in heaven so loud? Why are the pardoned the most fervent there in their hosannahs and praise? Because they know that they are pardoned. They have taken up into heaven a remembrance of the sins which they committed upon earth; they compare their former state with their present: they see something of the amazing love which has saved them; and though the voice of all the angels were silenced, they could not hold their peace. They would still make the courts of heaven ring with this one sound, *Salvation.* They would still say, *Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us.* They would still cry aloud, *Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins, be glory and dominion for ever.*

REV. C. BRADLEY.

#### *Self-examination.*

WHAT am I? It needs no inquiry, but it calls for serious consideration, that I am a reasonable creature, lower than the angels, higher than the brutes; capable of knowing, serving and glorifying God in this world, and of seeing and enjoying him in a better. I am made for my Creator, and am accountable to him: this I am; God grant that I may not have such a noble and excellent being in vain! But here this question has another meaning. All the children of men, by the fall of the first Adam, are become sinners; some of the children of men, by the grace of the second Adam, are become saints; some re-

main in a state of nature, others are brought into a state of grace; some are sanctified, others unsanctified. This is a distinction which divides all mankind, and which will last when all other divisions and subdivisions shall be no more. Now when I ask, what am I?—the meaning is, which of these two do I belong to? Am I in the favour of God, or under his wrath and curse? Am I a servant of God, or a slave to the world and the flesh? whither am I going? to heaven or hell? If I should die this night, and I am not sure to live till to-morrow, whither would death bring me? where would death lodge me? In endless light, or in utter darkness?

It highly concerns us all to be strict and impartial in this inquiry. What will it avail us to deceive ourselves? God cannot be imposed upon, though men may. . . . Therefore that I may discover what my spiritual state is, let me seriously inquire—

1. What choice have I made? Have I chosen God's favour for my felicity and satisfaction, or the pleasures of sense and the wealth of this world? Since I came to be capable of acting for myself, have I made religion my deliberate choice? Have I chosen God for my portion, Christ for my Master, the Scripture for my rule, holiness for my way, and Heaven for my home and everlasting rest? If not, how can I expect to have what I never chose?

2. What change have I experienced? When I ask—am I a child of wrath, or a child of love; I must remember that I was by nature a child of wrath; now can I witness to a change, though I cannot exactly tell the time and manner, and steps of that change. Time was when I minded nothing but pleasure, or nothing but the business of this world; when I never seriously thought of God, and Christ, and my soul, and another world; but now it is otherwise; I see a reality in invisible things; I find an alteration in my care and concern; and now I ask more solicitously, *What shall I do to be saved?* than ever I asked, *What shall I eat, or what shall I drink, or wherewithal shall I be clothed?* Time was, when this vain and carnal heart of mine had no relish at all of holy ordinances, took no delight in them, called them a task and a weariness: but now it is otherwise; I love to be alone with God, and though I bring little to pass, yet I love to be doing in his service. If I have indeed experienced such a change as

this, grace, free grace must have the glory of it, and I may take the comfort of it; but if I have not found any such work wrought in my heart, if I am still what I was by nature, vain, and carnal, and careless; if Jordan run still in the old channel, and was never yet driven back before the ark of the covenant; I have reason to suspect the worst of myself. If all go one way, without struggle or opposition, it is to be feared it is not the right way.

3. What is the bent of my affections? The affections are the pulse of the soul: if we would know its state, we must observe how that pulse beats. How do I stand affected to sin? Do I dread it as most dangerous, loathe it as most odious, and complain of it as most grievous? or do I make a light matter of it, as the madman who casts firebrands, arrows and death, and says, 'Am not I in sport?' Which lies heavier, the burden of sin, or the burden of affliction? and which am I most desirous to be eased of? What do I think of Christ? How do I stand affected to him? Do I love him and prize him, as 'the fairest of ten thousand' in himself, and the fittest of ten thousand for me? or has he, in mine eyes, no form nor comeliness; and is he no more than another beloved?—How do I stand affected to the word and ordinances? Are God's tabernacles amiable with me; or are they despicable? Am I in God's service as in my element; as one who calls it a delight? or am I in it, as under confinement, and as one that calls it a drudgery?—How do I stand affected to good people? Do I love the image of Christ wherever I see it; though it be in rags, or though not in my own colour? Do I honour them that fear the Lord, and choose his people for my people in all conditions? or do I prefer the gaieties of the world, before the beauties of holiness?—How do I stand affected to this world? Is it under my feet, where it should be; or in my heart, where Christ should be? Do I value it, and love it, and seek it with a prevailing concern? or do I look upon it with a holy contempt and indifference? Which have the greater command over me, those riches, honours, and pleasures that are worldly, or those that are spiritual and divine?—How do I stand affected to the other world? Do I dread eternal misery in a world of spirits, more than the greatest temporal calamities here in this world of sense? Do I desire

eternal happiness in a future state, more than the highest contentments and satisfactions this present state can pretend to? or are the things of the other world, though sure and near, looked upon as doubtful and distant, and consequently little?

4. What is the course and tenour of my conversation? *The tree is known by its fruits.* Do I work the works of the flesh, or bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? Do I allow myself in any known sin, under the cloak of a visible profession? Dare I, upon any provocation, swear or curse, or profane God's holy name, and therein speak the language of his enemies? Dare I, upon any allurement, to please my appetite, or please my company, drink to excess, and sacrifice my reason, honour, and conscience, to that base and brutish lust? Dare I defile a living temple of the Holy Ghost by adultery, fornication, uncleanness, or any act of lasciviousness? Dare I tell a lie for my gain or reputation? Dare I go beyond, or defraud my brother in any matter, cheat those I deal with, or oppress those I have the advantage of? Dare I deny relief to the poor that really need it, when it is in the power of my hand to give it? Dare I bear malice to any, and study revenge? If so, I must know that these 'are not the spots of God's children.' If this be the life I live, I am certainly a stranger to the life of God.

Thus we must examine our spiritual state; and that the trial may come to an issue, we must earnestly pray to God to discover us to ourselves, and must be willing to know the truth of our case; and the result must be this—if we find cause to fear that our spiritual state is bad, and that we are unsanctified and unregenerate; we must give all diligence to get the matter mended. If our state be not good, yet, thanks be to God, it may be made good: *there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.* If we find cause to hope that our spiritual state is good, we must take the comfort of it, and give God the praise; and not hearken to the tempter, when he would disturb our peace, and hinder our progress by calling it in question. God keep us all both from deceiving ourselves with groundless hopes, and from disquieting ourselves with groundless fears.

MATT. HENRY.

Consider the temper of thy heart towards spiritual things, the word and ordi-

nances of God, whether thou dost esteem highly of them, and delight in them; whether there be compliance of the heart with divine truths, something in thee, that suits and sides with them against thy corruptions; whether in thy affliction thou seekest not to the puddles of earthly comforts, but hast thy recourse to the sweet crystal streams of the divine promises, and findest refreshment in them. It may be, at some times, in a spiritual distemper, holy exercises and ordinances will not have that present sensible sweetness to a Christian, that he desires; and some will for a long time lie under dryness and deadness this way; yet, there is here an evidence of this spiritual life, that thou stayest by thy Lord, and reliest on him, and wilt not leave these holy means, how sapless soever to thy sense for the present. Thou findest for a long time little sweetness in prayer, yet thou prayest still, and, when thou canst say nothing, yet offerest at it, and lookest towards Christ thy life. Thou dost not turn away from these things to seek consolation elsewhere, but as thou knowest that life is in Christ, thou wilt stay till he refresh thee with new and lively influence. It is not any where but in him; as St. Peter said, *Lord, whither should we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life*, John vi. 68.

Consider with thyself, whether thou hast any knowledge of the growth or deficiencies of this spiritual life; for it is here but begun, and breathes in an air contrary to it, and lodges in a house that often smokes and darkens it. Canst thou go on in formal performances, from one year to another, and make no advancement in the inward exercises of grace, and retest thou content with that? It is no good sign. But art thou either gaining victories over sin, and further strength of faith and love, and other graces, or, at least, art thou earnestly seeking these, and bewailing thy wants and disappointments of this kind? Then, thou livest. At the worst, wouldst thou rather grow this way, be further off from sin, and nearer to God, than grow in thy estate, or credit, or honours? Esteemest thou more highly of grace than of the whole world? There is life at the root; although thou findest not that flourishing thou desirest; yet, the desire of it is life in thee. And, if growing this way, art thou content, whatsoever is thy outward estate? Canst thou solace thyself

in the love and goodness of thy God, though the world frown on thee? Art thou unable to take comfort in the smiles of the world, when his face is hid? This tells thee thou livest, and that he is thy life.

Although many Christians have not so much sensible joy, yet they account spiritual joy and the light of God's countenance the only true joy, and all other without it madness; and they cry, and sigh, and wait for it. Meanwhile, not only duty and the hopes of attaining a better state in religion, but even love to God, makes them to do so, to serve, and please, and glorify him to their utmost. And this is not a dead resting without God, but it is a stable compliance with his will in the highest point; waiting for him, and living by faith, which is most acceptable to him. In a word, whether in sensible comfort or without it, still, this is the fixed thought of a believing soul, *It is good for me to draw nigh to God*, Psa. lxxiii. 28;—only good; and it will not live in a willing estrangedness from him, what way soever he be pleased to deal with it.

LEIGHTON.

*The constant need the Believer has of Christ.*

MAKE use of Christ constantly. There may be such a weakness amongst some believers, that they think, that when they began first upon godliness, they stood in need daily of the High Priest, they are weak and feeble: but after they have got a great deal of experience, they hope that that experience and the means of grace may do pretty well with them. And that is the reason, why so many do so very ill. No Christian can ever outlive the necessity of employing Christ as High Priest in all the steps of his life and in the last step through death we must still lean upon this High Priest; we go by our High Priest within the vail, leaning and going through the vail of his flesh. And truly I am afraid, (the Lord prevent it in you mercifully and graciously;) I am afraid of some Christians, that their best acts of faith on Christ Jesus are at their last, that their believing through the course of their pilgrimage is a little mingled and mixed with something of themselves; and when they come to the awful and dreadful step, and look death and judgment in the face, then they throw all away to the moles and bats; then their renouncing their own righteousness is no great business to a believer. . . .

You may know if you have Christ thus ; if you have daily work for him, you have him ; for if you understand it rightly, it is a certain truth, that the employing of Christ is the possessing of him, the employing of him is the enjoying of him. It is impossible, that any can employ Christ in any part of his office, that has not Christ in that office really bestowed upon them. If, therefore, you have Christ, this will unavoidably be ; you have an evidence, that you have him by this, that you have daily work for this great High Priest, you need the sprinkling of his blood for your daily transgressions, and need the efficacy of his grace for your daily wants. Never bid a worse sign for a man that has not Christ, than that he has no sense of the want of him. He that has no work for Christ, is yet without God and Christ in the world ; and a poor believer that groans in a sense of his need of Christ, is oftentimes discouraged, when it should be an argument of encouragement. Believers, if they be lively and growing, will find the universal sense of all of them is this : In truth I find I have far more need of Christ than I had twenty, thirty years ago. As his fulness is discovered, and our emptiness discovered to us, our employing him does increase, as well as our enjoyment of him.

REV. R. TRAILL.

*What it is to be built on Christ.*

To be built on Christ, is plainly to believe in him. But in this the most deceive themselves ; they hear of great privileges and happiness in Christ, and presently imagine it as all theirs, without any more ado ; as that madman of Athens, who wrote up all the ships that came into the haven, for his own. We consider not what it is to believe in him, nor what is the necessity of this believing, in order that we may be partakers of the salvation that he hath wrought. It is not they that that have heard of him, or that have some common knowledge of him, or that are able to discourse of him, and speak of his person and nature aright, but, *they that believe in him*. Much of our knowledge is like that of the poor philosopher, who defineth riches exactly, and discourseth of their nature, but possesseth none ; or we are as a geometrician, who can measure land exactly in all its dimensions, but pos-

sesseth not a foot thereof. And truly it is but a lifeless unsavoury knowledge that men have of Christ by all books and study, till he reveal himself and persuade the heart to *believe in him*. Then, indeed, when it sees him, and is made one with him, it says of all the reports it heard, I heard much, yet *the half was not told me*. There is in lively faith, when it is infused into the soul, a clearer knowledge of Christ and his excellency than before, and with it, a recumbency of the soul upon him as the foundation of its life and comfort ; a resolving to rest on him, and not to depart from him upon any terms.— Though I be beset on all hands, be accused by the law, and by mine own conscience, and by Satan, and have nothing to answer for myself, yet, here I will stay, for I am sure in him there is salvation, and no where else. All other refuges are but lies, (as it is expressed in the words of the prophet Isaiah,) poor base shifts that will do no good. God hath laid this precious stone in Sion for this very purpose, that weary souls may rest upon it ; and why should not I make use of it according to his intention ? He hath not forbid any, how wretched soever, to believe, but commands it, and himself works it where he will, even in the vilest sinners.

Think it not enough that you know this stone is laid, but see whether you are built on it by faith. The multitude of imaginary believers lie round about it, but they are never the better nor the surer for that, any more than stones that lie loose in heaps near unto a foundation, but are not joined to it. There is no benefit to us by Christ without union with him ; no comfort in his riches without an interest in them, and a title to them by virtue of that union. Then is the soul right, when it can say, *He is altogether lovely*, and as the Spouse, Cant. ii. 16, *he is mine, my well-beloved*. This union is the spring of all spiritual consolations. And faith, by which we are thus united, is a divine work. He that laid this foundation in Sion with his own hand, works likewise with the same hand faith in the heart, by which it is knit to this corner-stone. It is not so easy as we imagine, to believe. See Eph. i. 19. Many that think they believe, are, on the contrary, like those of whom the Prophet speaks, as *hardened in sin* and carnally

secure, whom he represents as in covenant with hell and death, walking in sin, and yet promising themselves impunity.

ABP. LEIGHTON.

*We do not stand by the Grace that is in us, but only by the Grace that is in Christ.*

You should know where your standing is, what foundation you stand upon. All grace comes from Christ Jesus; and the end of his giving of grace is, that he may be more improved and used by his people; for all the saving graces of the Spirit of God, are but like so many various tools and instruments, by which the new creature acts towards its original. Now, here is a woful course of a great many; when Christ bestows his grace, grace many a time is put in his own room; when he makes his grace to dwell in us, we are apt to forget that our standing is in himself alone, that created, and infused, and dispensed the grace that is lodged in us. As we are made vessels of grace, we are as feeble as ever; no dispensation of grace was ever given in this world for that end; and if it be used for that end, it is grossly abused. That a believer should live the less dependent upon Jesus Christ, is a snare that you have great need all of you to take good heed of, and beware of. Remember that you do not live, and that you do not stand by the grace that is in you, but only by the grace that is in him. Our strength stands in the fountain: *Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* A believer thinks himself exceeding weak, when he can see nothing of Christ's grace in himself; but that is a great mistake; that man is exceeding weak indeed, that can see no grace in Christ Jesus; that man is fallen wofully. How excellently does the Apostle speak of it: *Most gladly therefore will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For when I am weak, then am I strong,* 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. It is best with me when I am nothing. What a mighty word is that, *Though I be nothing!* ver. 11.

REV. R. TRAILL.

Paul, in his temptation, 2 Cor. xii. 7—9, betakes himself to the right course—to prayer to the Lord! and *thrice he besought the Lord, that it might depart from him.* He is answered, *My grace is sufficient for*

*thee.* We would be apt to think, that Paul's great stock of grace, and manifold experience, and his late extraordinary enjoyment, might have been sufficient to have supported Paul in his conflict. No: they could not. Our Lord saith not, 'Thy grace is sufficient for thee, which I have abundantly bestowed on thee,' but, *My grace is sufficient for thee.* So the Apostle exhorts another, 2 Tim. ii. 1, *Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus;* and Eph. vi. 10. There are many *enemies of the grace of God*, because few are partakers of it. Such as have not felt the power of it on their own hearts, will always pick quarrels with the pure doctrine of grace. Some cannot receive this plain Gospel-truth, that a man must be constituted righteous in the sight of God, only through the righteousness of another person, even Jesus Christ, imputed to the sinner of free grace. And some that own this truth, stumble again on this other truth, that the sanctification of a justified believer flows from the constant supplies of grace from Christ, their head and root. They think that there are habits of grace implanted in the new creature, (and this is not to be denied,) and if they guide well what they have received in the grace of regeneration, they may live well, and grow on to perfection. But it is not duly minded in men's spiritual exercise, that no stock of grace was ever given to any believer, to take him off the sense of his need of daily dependence on the original grace in Christ Jesus. But the greatest receivers always act their dependence most humbly, and see their need of it most clearly, and find the benefit of that dependence most comfortably. . . .

Be satisfied, that this grace which is your supply, is all in Christ Jesus, and not in your own hand. Since Adam fell, and ruined himself and all his posterity, by having his and their stock in his own hand, and sinning it away, the Lord, in mercy, hath resolved never to entrust a mere man again with his own stock; but hath lodged all the grace his people are saved and supplied by, in Christ's hand. And there it is safe. Adam was created perfect, and had a sufficient stock to have enriched himself and all his offspring; but he was left to his free will, and so came on it. This is an eternal disgrace to man's free will. What must the free will of a sinner be able to do, when the free will of perfect sinless

man opened the door to sin, and death, and ruin, upon the whole world of mankind? It is therefore graciously and wisely provided, that free will shall have no hand in the salvation of sinners, (and, indeed, free will to good, is but a vain name, usurped by willing and wilful slaves of sin;) and that in its stead, the free grace of God in Jesus Christ shall be, and do, all in all. But we are so proud, that we would fain have somewhat in our own hand; and are so used to sense, and unskilful in believing, that we can hardly reckon that our own, that is not in our possession, and at our disposing. But, in this order, the Lord consults the interest of his glory, and the security of our salvation, and daily supplies, by lodging our all in Christ's hand; who is able to keep it safely for us, and ready and willing to give forth of it to us, according to our real necessity.

REV. R. TRAILL.

Nor do we suppose that inherent grace in the saints has a sufficiency of ability in itself to endure the greatest and severest trials that can befall it in this world. It is certain that it shall be carried safely through all, but not in its own strength and ability. This is a true observation of the learned Gerson, 'The most perfect creature left to itself will fall into ruin.' This was exemplified in the angels that fell, and in Adam, though in a perfect state. Divine preservation is the prop which supports the best creatures from ruin. Grace itself is but a creature, and therefore a dependent being. It is but a stream, depending upon the supply of the fountain. If the fountain let not forth itself, what becomes of the stream? That is a true and judicious observation of the learned Dr. Ames, 'The perseverance of believers, or the immutability of their condition, if we view the whole ground and reason of it, is not wholly from within or wholly from without itself; but partly from the nature of the spiritual life which flows from Christ into them, and partly from the keeping, protection, and direction of God.' That protection is always afforded to this life of grace; and this life of grace always needs that protection. The best of men are but men at best. It was not Peter's grace and resolution that kept him, but Christ's care of him and intercession for him, Luke xxii. 32. *Be strong in the Lord*, says the Apostle, *and in the*

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*power of his might*, Eph. vi. 10. *Without me*, says Christ, *ye can do nothing*, John xv. 5.

FLAVEL.

The Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death. Hence, *he is our life*. A sinner who is alive to God, must first have been quickened by his grace; and that grace alone, in continual communication, preserves the life which it has imparted. Though partakers of quickening grace in regeneration, such is the power of sin, that we need a continual supply. From the highest exercises of grace, all would soon degenerate again into the corruption of sin, if it were not for the droppings of this precious *Myrrh* from the Tree of Life. If it were not for the constant supplies which he promises, and which he faithfully communicates to his people, the spiritual life would soon die again; it has no innate independent principle of vitality. Daily experience convinces the believer of his total dependence upon Christ, who is his life, and the Spirit of life in him. His only security is, that *his life is hid with Christ in God*. Therefore he never lives aright, either for the peace of his conscience, the sanctification of his heart, or the holiness of his walk, but as *he lives in the Spirit, and walks in the Spirit*; or, as *he lives the life which he now lives in the flesh, by the faith of the Son of God*. Blessed Jesus! ever dwell in my heart by these enlivening influences of thy grace; let faith receive and enjoy thee, and render thee the glory of every gift of grace.

REV. W. GOODE.

#### *On False and True Peace.*

ONE petition in the Litany hath dwelt much on my mind—'O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world, grant us thy peace.' I am fearful of receiving peace from any but Christ; or in any other way, than by having my sins taken away. I believe that much of the ease and quietness of my mind proceeds rather from false peace and carnal security, than from the peace derived from Christ. Time often wears off the sense of guilt, and the accusations of conscience frequently die away. Attention to other things often drives my sins into obscurity and forgetfulness. And hence proceeds my peace of mind. This, I fear, has been the case too often. I see and feel the

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danger of such things happening. The artifices of Satan, and the deceitfulness of my own heart, can find no plan more ruinous and fatal to my soul. Hence proceeds, more or less, my daily neglect of Christ. I am healed without him; and therefore he is not sought after. I hope to be above all things watchful against this ruinous evil in future. I will endeavour to keep my sins in view in all their guilt, and to have a continual feeling sense of what is due to them, till the Lamb of God takes them away, and grants me his peace. I think that I would freely prefer any misery to this false peace and carnal security; and would willingly live without peace, unless I can receive it from the hands of Christ. What, receive peace from the devil! God forbid. Rather let me endure any misery from the hand of God. Our dealing should be with God only; and we should receive nothing but what he is pleased to give. Our ears should be open to none but Christ, whom the Father hath commanded us to hear. When he speaketh peace, then, and not till then, let us receive it. Let us seek and wait for it; but never take it, till the Lamb of God takes away sin, and grants us his peace. When we receive it from him, it is effectual. It comforts, it refreshes, it strengthens the soul; and it will endure in the sight of sin, guilt, death, and hell. His peace is peculiar: no one can either give or take it away. It is worth seeking and worth waiting for.

REV. T. CHARLES.

*Peace with God in the Conscience and Love to God in the Heart inseparably connected.*

*Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given unto us. . . .*

In this delightful portion of Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us, how he brings sinners to know that God loves them. It is by believing in the righteousness and atonement of the Son of God. Hence spring peace and love—peace with God in the conscience, and love to God in the heart. There is an inseparable connexion between those two graces: the one cannot exist without the other. Whoever knows the God of peace, will find that God is love: for being justified by faith, he will thereby see that God is at peace with him, and himself in a state of free acceptance before him; in which he shall stand and

be kept safe, until he receives the promised glory: the hope of which will be confirmed by his daily experience of God's faithfulness, making all things, even tribulations, work together for his good in the way to glory: thus will the Holy Spirit satisfy him of the love of God to his soul. And the persuasion of his love begets love. It softens the hard heart; it warms the cold heart; it works kindly upon all the affections; and, by setting before them every possible good to be enjoyed in their reconciled God, it mightily disposes them to seek their supreme happiness in walking humbly and closely with him.

Attend then, O my soul, to this Scripture. Meditate upon the experience of which it treats. Pray for it; pray for more of it. And, above all, observe the great truth here taught thee by the Holy Ghost, namely, that thou canst not have any true love of God but what arises from the sense of his being at peace with thee in Jesus. O beware of false teachers; for there is great reason. Many pretend to love an absolute God, without viewing him in the covenant of grace, or as he has revealed himself in the incarnation of his Son. There has been no love of this kind in any heart upon the earth for near six thousand years. Adam in paradise might love him thus: but when driven out of paradise for sin, he could love him so no more. The promised seed of the woman, the Word made flesh, became then the object of his faith, and the only ground of his love. The Scripture has clearly determined this: *We love him because he first loved us—And in this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* When the Holy Ghost has taught this love of God to sinners, and by believing has manifested it to their hearts: then they love him upon Christian principles; and sinners cannot love him upon any other. They love him for that infinite mercy which led him to send his only-begotten Son into the world to finish the salvation of his people; they love him for sending the Holy Ghost to enable them to see the everlasting sufficiency of this salvation, and to believe the record of God concerning it: whereby they come to experience how much the Father loved them. This is heaven begun. The Father's love shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost is the foretaste of glory. Whoever enjoys it, has found what is *more*

*to be desired than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.* O, it is indeed heaven upon earth. To preserve it, to improve it, is become the only study of the happy believer. The panting of his soul is after more of this love. The prayer of his faith is, O thou eternal Spirit, help me so to walk with my most loving Father, as that I may maintain peace with him in my conscience, and a growing love to him in my heart, until thou bring me to the enjoyment of everlasting peace and love.

REV. W. ROMAINE.

*Contrast between Natural and Revealed Religion in the hour of Death.*

THAT which principally displays the prerogatives of the Christian above those of the philosopher, is an all-sufficient provision against the fear of death. A comparison between a dying pagan and a dying Christian will shew this. I consider a pagan, in his dying-bed, speaking to himself what follows: 'On which side soever I consider my state, I perceive nothing but trouble and despair. If I observe the forerunners of death, I see awful symptoms, violent sickness, and intolerable pain, which surround my sick-bed, and are the first scenes of the bloody tragedy. As to the world, my dearest objects disappear; my closest connexions are dissolving; my most specious titles are effacing; my noblest privileges are vanishing away; a dismal curtain falls between my eyes and all the decorations of the universe. In regard to my body, it is a mass without motion and life; my tongue is about to be condemned to eternal silence; my eyes to perpetual darkness; all the organs of my body to entire dissolution; and the miserable remains of my carcass to lodge in the grave, and to become food for the worms. If I consider my soul, I scarcely know whether it be immortal; and could I demonstrate its natural immortality, I should not be able to say, whether my Creator would display his attributes in preserving, or in destroying it; whether my wishes for immortality be the dictates of nature, or the language of sin. If I consider my past life, I have a witness within me, attesting that my practice hath been less than my knowledge, how small soever the latter hath been; and that the abundant depravity of my heart hath thickened the darkness of my mind. If I con-

sider futurity, I think I discover, through many thick clouds, a future state; my reason suggests, that the Author of nature hath not given me a soul so sublime in thought, and so expansive in desire, merely to move in this little orb for a moment: But this is nothing but conjecture; and, if there be another economy after this, should I be less miserable than I am here? One moment I hope for annihilation, the next I shudder with the fear of being annihilated; my thoughts and desires are at war with each other, they rise, they resist, they destroy one another.' Such is the dying heathen. If a few examples of those, who have died otherwise, be adduced, they ought not to be urged in evidence against what we have advanced; for they are rare, and very probably deceptive, their outward tranquillity being only a concealment of trouble within. Trouble is the greater for confinement within, and for an affected appearance without. As we ought not to believe, that philosophy hath rendered men insensible of pain, because some philosophers have maintained, that pain is no evil, and have seemed to triumph over it: so neither ought we to believe, that it hath disarmed death in regard to the disciples of natural religion, because some have affirmed that death is not an object of fear. After all, if some pagans enjoyed a real tranquillity at death, it was a groundless tranquillity, to which reason contributed nothing at all.

O! how differently do Christians die! How doth revealed religion triumph over the religion of nature in this respect! May each of our hearers be a new evidence of this article! The whole, that troubles an expiring heathen, revives a Christian in his dying bed.

Thus speaks the dying Christian: 'When I consider the awful symptoms of death, and the violent agonies of dissolving nature, they appear to me as medical preparations, sharp, but salutary; they are necessary to detach me from life, and to separate the remains of inward depravity from me. Beside, I shall not be abandoned to my own frailty: but my patience and constancy will be proportional to my sufferings, and that powerful arm, which hath supported me through life, will uphold me under the pressure of death. If I consider my sins, many as they are, I am invulnerable; for I go to a tribunal of mercy, where God is reconciled, and justice is satisfied. If I



consider my body, I perceive, I am putting off a mean and corruptible habit, and putting on robes of glory. Fall, fall ye imperfect senses, ye frail organs, fall house of clay into your original dust; you will be *sown in corruption*, but *raised in incorruption*; *sown in dishonour*, but *raised in glory*; *sown in weakness*, but *raised in power*, 1 Cor. xv. 42. If I consider my soul, it is passing, I see, from slavery to freedom. I shall carry with me that which thinks and reflects. I shall carry with me the delicacy of taste, the harmony of sounds, the beauty of colours, the fragrance of odouriferous smells. I shall surmount heaven and earth, nature and all terrestrial things, and my ideas of all their beauties will multiply and expand. If I consider the future economy, to which I go, I have, I own, very inadequate notions of it; but my incapacity is the ground of my expectation. Could I perfectly comprehend it, it would argue its resemblance to some of the present objects of my senses, or its minute proportion to the present operations of my mind. If worldly dignities and grandeurs, if accumulated treasures, if the enjoyments of the most refined voluptuousness, were to represent to me celestial felicity, I should suppose that, partaking of their nature, they partook of their vanity. But, if nothing here can represent the future state, it is because that state surpasseth every other. My ardour is increased by my imperfect knowledge of it. My knowledge and virtue, I am certain, will be perfected; I know, I shall comprehend truth, and obey order; I know I shall be free from all evils, and in possession of all good; I shall be present with God, I know, and with all the happy spirits who surround his throne; and this perfect state, I am sure, will continue for ever and ever.

Such are the all-sufficient supports which revealed religion affords against the fear of death. Such are the meditations of a dying Christian; not of one, whose whole Christianity consists of dry speculations, which have no influence over his practice; but of one who applies his knowledge to relieve the wants of his life. SAURIN.

*Where there is terror, there is greater consolation in Religion.*

WHENEVER you think of any thing which is in itself terrible, and matter of discouragement, be sure that you mingle the consideration thereof with those sweet

things which God hath given and prescribed to you. There is nothing terrible, as it respects the believer, but God hath joined some comfortable thing with it. The name of God is terrible; he is called the great and dreadful God: but, to sweeten this, he is called the God of all consolations. Death is terrible; he is called the King of Terrors: but to sweeten this, death is called a sleep. The day of judgment is terrible; but, to sweeten that, our present Advocate shall be our future judge; yea, our best friend, and our dear husband. Now, if you abstract the terror of any object from the sweetness of it, no wonder if you be much discouraged. We should behold things as God presents them; and take things as God gives them. *What God hath joined together, no man may put asunder.* If you consider the sweetness of an object, or of a condition, without the sourness of it, then you may grow too wanton. If you consider the terror of an object, or of a condition, without the sweetness of it, then you may be too fearful. But, if you think on both together, then you will fear and believe; and believe and fear; and so be kept from discouragement. REV. W. BRIDGE.

*The law of God a test of Inquiry as to the Reality of our Religious Principles.*

WHAT has been said on this subject may help all who are inquiring, to determine whether their religion is of the right kind, or not.

Has it had its foundation in the knowledge of God's law? Has this given you the knowledge and conviction of your own sinfulness, and of the dreadful state you are in as a sinner? Persons may have a great deal of solicitude about their souls, and their eternal state, and have a great deal of religion, such as it is, and yet be quite ignorant of the law of God; and so have no true conviction of sin. This seems to have been the case with the young man who came to Christ with this important question, *What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?* He appeared to be greatly engaged about his eternal interest; but at the same time manifested himself to be quite ignorant of the law of God, and so of his own true character.

Many have appeared to be in great terrors and distress about their souls and a future state, for a time, who have had no true conviction of sin by the law. They

are not able to give any distinct and intelligible account of the ground of their concern. There have been many of this sort in times of great and general awakening, and solemn attention to the things of religion; they, by hearing terrifying preaching, or seeing others in great distress about their souls, or from some other cause, are themselves terrified with fears they shall go to hell. But if they are examined, they cannot give a rational account about the matter; and all their apprehensions about sin and hell seem to be confused and imaginary. After they have continued in these terrors for a while, they receive light and comfort, as they call it: and this is as confused and imaginary as their preceding terrors were. It is all without any true knowledge of the law, sin, the character of the Mediator, and the way of salvation by him. No wonder if the religion which has such a foundation and beginning, issues in mad enthusiasm, or a careless immoral life, or both.

But let us proceed in the inquiry.

Has the law come, and in the light of this have you seen your own character, and been convinced of sin? Have you been convinced that you were nothing but sin, guilt, and vileness; that you are by nature totally corrupt, and wholly without any good thing. All who have the knowledge of God's law fall under this conviction. And they who never see themselves in this light, may depend upon it, that they have not been truly convinced of sin, and are ignorant of themselves in a degree which is inconsistent with true religion.

Have you been brought to see and feel yourselves wholly to blame for every thing in you that is not perfectly conformed to God's law, or for every thing short of perfect holiness; that you have no excuse for not obeying God's law perfectly? And is it become easy and natural for you to take all the blame to yourselves? Many appear not to be brought to this; and so not to have the true knowledge of their sinfulness. They say, 'We can do nothing of ourselves. We are poor, weak, impotent creatures, and can do nothing any farther than God assists by his Spirit.' And though this is in a sense true; yet they evidently speak of this as some excuse for their not being perfectly holy; or not living in a high degree of the exercise of faith and holiness. Such have not the true knowledge of God's law, and have

not been convinced of sin, as God's people are. Man is under no inability to come up to all that God's law requires, which in any degree abates his obligation to perfect holiness, or affords the least excuse for the want of it. The true Christian takes all the blame to himself for every thing in him that is contrary to God's law, or that is short of perfect holiness. He sees and owns his obligation to be perfectly holy; and condemns and takes shame to himself before God constantly, for every thing wherein he falls short of coming up to this most perfect and excellent rule: for he always considers this law as the only rule of his duty.

Has the law of God slain you, so that you have found it to be unto death? Have you found yourselves justly under the curse of this law, deserving eternal damnation? Has it killed all your hopes of recommending yourselves to God in the least degree by any of your own virtue and doings, and cured you of all such attempts? Thus Paul says it was with him: *I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.* Thus it is with every true Christian.

Do you like the law of God, considered in all its strictness and whole extent; and love it, and delight in it as holy, just, and good? Rom. vii. 12—22. Can you say with the Psalmist, *O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day,* Psal. cxix. 97. This is the character of every good man, *His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night,* Psal. i. 2. Are you disposed and ready to justify God in making such a law, and maintaining it, in the manner he does? Do you revere, love, and honour, the character of the Deity, hereby exhibited to your view? And does the love to this law that Christ hath manifested, and his disposition and zeal to maintain and honour it, though it cost him his life, greatly recommend him to your esteem and love? It was this that recommended him to the Father, as it is written of him: *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of joy above thy fellows,* Heb. i. 9. And it is this that recommends him to every true Christian. In this his excellency chiefly consists: and in this consists his merit and righteousness, in which the believer trusts for pardon and

acceptance with God. How evident and certain is it then, that he who does not understand and love the law of God, does not see Christ's excellency, nor know wherein his worthiness and righteousness consist; and so does not love him, nor trust in him!

Do you long for, seek, and strive after, conformity to this law? Is this the rule you keep in view as the measure of all your exercises and conduct; looking upon yourselves as sinful, so far as you are not conformed to this most perfect rule in heart and life, not desiring the law should be abated in its strictness or brought down to you in the least degree: but desiring yourselves to attain to that perfect holiness which it requires, as an essential part of that salvation you trust in Christ for; and knowing, and feeling, that you cannot be perfectly happy in any other way, or in any attainment short of this? This is most certainly true of every real Christian. Such not only love the law of God, and seek conformity to it as the only rule of their duty, but as their happiness: and the heaven they are seeking for, consists chiefly in this, in their view.

Do you place all your religious attainments, in conformity and obedience to this law? Do the exercises of your religion consist in love to God and your neighbour; and in those things which are implied in this, and result from it? By this you may be helped to determine what is the nature of your religion. There are many, it is to be feared, whose religion will appear to be not of the right kind, if impartially tried by this rule. It consists in self-love, or selfishness; this being the spring of all their exercises and actions, which is as contrary to the love of God and our neighbour, as darkness is to light, or as sin is to holiness. Or it consists wholly in some extraordinary impulses and agitations of mind, or a set of religious exercises and experiences, as they call them; in great discoveries and high flights of affection, joy, &c., which, when examined, appear to have nothing of love to God or to man in them: so have no real conformity to God's law, or any tendency to it. When a person's religious exercises and experiences appear to be of this kind; especially when this is apparent in the fruit; they not leading to, and issuing in, conformity to the law of God in life and conversation, we may depend upon it, his religion is all wrong.

Do you grow in a sense of your own sinfulness? This is always the case with true Christians, who have the knowledge of sin by the law. As they increase in a discerning and sense of the excellence and glory of the divine character and law, they see more and more of their own true character as sinners; and are hence led to see more of the depth, strength, and extent of wickedness in their hearts, as it discovers itself in its various actings. They are constantly making progress in discoveries of this kind, and growing in a sense of the sinfulness of every sin; see more and more of its infinite odiousness and ill desert. There are many professing Christians who talk and act as if they thought they had done with conviction of sin, as soon as they became Christians. All the conviction of sin they have any notion of, is something which preceded their supposed conversion: and since that they have had very little sense of sin, or concern about their own sinfulness. It is not so with the true Christian. When he first commenced a Christian, he began to see his own sinfulness in a true light, and all that went before was a very deficient, partial conviction, and is nothing, compared with this. And conviction of sin has attended, and kept pace with all his religious exercises and attainments. Therefore, while the hypocrite, or the professor who is not truly converted, is bloated, lifted up, and proud, and grows in a high esteem of his own excellence and attainments, being ignorant of his own true character; the real Christian, as he makes advances in the knowledge of God and his law, is constantly growing less, more mean, odious, and ill-deserving, in his own eyes, and sinking down, in a growing sense of his own infinite vileness and ill desert; viewing himself as all over defiled and abominable; condemning, abasing, and abhorring himself, and repenting in dust and ashes.

REV. S. HOPKINS.

#### *Self-examination in the prospect of Death.*

Ask thyself a few questions: but see that they be of such importance as to be sufficient to decide the case.

'O my soul, dost thou believe in the Lord Jesus with all thy heart? In persuasion of his ability and willingness to save thee, dost thou stay thyself on him, and rely on his great sacrifice and merit for pardon, righteousness, and life? And,

consenting to him in all his relations and offices, dost thou apply to him for *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*? And, venturing thy all in his hands, dost thou resign thyself unfeignedly to him?' If so, this may comfort thee in a dying hour: *for this is the record, that God hath given us his Son, and life in him; and whosoever hath the Son, hath life.*

'O my soul, art thou a humble, penitent, mourner for sin? Hast thou such a tender heart, as plungeth thee into the depths of true evangelic repentance? Dost thou hate sin as it is sin, and this with a deadly hatred? And art thou busy in the use of all mortifying means to get the power of sin subdued, and the pollution thereof cleansed away?' This may also afford a pleasant expectation after death: *for then those that have sown in tears shall reap a harvest of eternal joy.*

'O my soul, art thou sincere and pure in heart? Dost thou keep thyself from thine iniquity? Dost thou separate thyself from sin, and state thyself against it, as being thy deadly enemy? And art thou in hard exercise, by fasting, by prayer, by watching, by contemning this world, by strong resolves, and earnest dependence on the Mediator's assistance, to get all thy corruptions mortified, and all thy lusts subdued? And art thou successful, having in part gotten the victory? Art thou in daily earnest contention against the *body of sin and death*? And dost thou put on to thy uttermost, through the grace of God, through the blood of Christ, through the efficacy of the promises, through the power of faith, and through the virtue of love, to cleanse thyself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit?' If so, this may yield thee a comfortable hope in death; since he hath the true hope of heaven, who *purifieth himself even as God is pure.*

'O my soul, dost thou love thy Redeemer? I ask thee again, O my soul, dost thou love thy Redeemer? Dost thou love him in sincerity, with a love that surpasseth all other loves? Dost thou scorn this world, and all its pageantry, in comparison of him? Art thou resolved never to be satisfied but in an interest in him, nearness to him, and communion with him? Dost thou give him thy very heart, to dwell in it, to rule in it, and to enrich it with his grace? And with thy heart dost thou make a voluntary surrender of all that thou

art, hast, or canst do to him?' That man is ready for dying that can say with the Psalmist, *Whom have I in the heavens but thee, O Lord, and on the earth there is none I desire besides thee*; for he can also say, *Though heart and flesh fail me, God will be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*

'O my soul, dost thou unfeignedly study a *respect to all God's commandments*? Dost thou *seek the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness* in the *first* place? Art thou *loving mercy, doing justly, and walking humbly with thy God*; and *denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts*? Art thou living *soberly, righteously, and godly in a present evil world*? Art thou giving up thyself to all the exercises of a holy life, and seasonably exercising those graces that directly terminate on God, and at the same time following whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are honest, and whatsoever things are virtuous? Is it thy daily business to be uniform as well as constant in all graces, virtues, and duties, that belong to the man and to the Christian? and so tenderly conscientious, as to look not only to the matter and bulk of thy duties, but also to the manner of them; not only to what is done, but also from what principles and for what ends it is done?' If through grace this be thy chief study and habitual business, thou mayest look upon death without terror, *for the righteous have hope in death, and they that do his commandments are blessed, and have a right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates of the heavenly city.*

'O my soul, for God's sake, for thine own sake, for thy eternal happiness' sake, recollect thyself further, and review thy case as distinctly as thou canst with respect to the particulars mentioned. Art thou intimately and certainly conscious to thyself, there is not one sin thou regardest, or willingly harbourst in thy heart? That there is not one sin, but what thou wouldst give all thou hast in the world to be totally freed from, root and branch; and that thou dost not satisfy thyself only with wishes for a better state, but thou puttest on, in all industrious and watchful endeavours, through grace, to resist and mortify every sin, and practice every duty; that thou makest conscience of watching the heart and secret thoughts, and of

keeping a strict eye over thy most secret intentions, taking care, in every business that requires consideration, to do nothing wherein thou mayest not pray unto God to be thy assistant, and appeal unto him as thy witness and judge; and whatever sins thou art guilty of, which thou sadly re-sentest, and whatever defects there may be in thy duties; or whatever intermissions there may happen in this frame and deportment before the Lord, thou canst in humility appeal unto God, Thou Lord, that knowest all things, knowest that this is the habitual and predominant state of my heart and of my walk? O Searcher of hearts, try me, and search me, that I may see into the very bottom of my soul, and into all its designs: for if there be hypo-

crisy, it is unallowed and detested. Perfection I am infinitely short of, but sincerity, as in thy sight, I plead and claim. Search me, O Lord, that I may have a true sight of myself; and I am willing, I think, to submit to the severest discipline of thy mercy, and to undergo any cure, how rough soever thou seest necessary, for the purging away and correcting all the remaining corruptions and disorders of my soul.' If so, if this be thy real sense, O my soul, if thou mayest not deny it in some measure before the Lord, then thou mayest go out of this world with joyful presages of a happy life in the next. *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the end of that man is peace.*

REV. W. CRAWFORD.

#### SECTION IV.—THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.

*The Christian Convert warned of and animated against those Discouragements he must expect to meet with.*

WITH the utmost propriety has our Divine Master required us to strive to *enter in at the strait gate*, Luke xiii. 23; thereby, as it seems, intimating, not only that the passage is narrow, but that it is beset with enemies; beset on the right hand and on the left, with enemies cunning and formidable. And be assured, O reader, that whatever your circumstances in life are, you must meet and encounter them. It will therefore be your prudence to survey them attentively in your own reflections, that you may see what you are to expect. . . .

You have often heard them marshalled, as it were, under three great leaders, the flesh, the world, and the devil; and according to this distribution, I would call you to consider the forces of each, as setting themselves in array against you. . . .

Let your conscience answer, whether you do not carry about with you a corrupt and degenerate nature? You will, I doubt not, feel its effects. You will feel, in the language of the Apostle (who speaks of it as the case of Christians themselves), the *flesh lusting against the spirit*, so that you will not be able, in all instances, to do the things that you would, Gal. v. 7. You brought irregular propensities into the world along with you; and you have so often

indulged those sinful inclinations, that you have greatly increased their strength; and you will find in consequence of it, that these habits cannot be broke through without great difficulty. You will, no doubt, often recollect the strong figures in which the Prophet describes a case like yours; and you will own that it is justly represented by that of an *Ethiopian changing his skin, and the leopard his spots*, Jer. xiii. 23. It is indeed possible that you may find such an edge and eagerness upon your spirits, as may lead you to imagine that all opposition will immediately fall before you. But, alas, I fear, that in a little time these enemies which seemed to be slain at your feet, will revive, and recover their weapons, and renew the assault in one form or another. And perhaps your most painful combats may be with such as you had thought most easy to be vanquished, and your greatest danger may arise from some of those enemies from whom you apprehended the least; particularly from pride, and from indolence of spirit; from a secret alienation of heart from God, and from an indisposition for conversing with him, through an immoderate attachment to things seen and temporal, which may be oftentimes exceeding dangerous to your salvation, though perhaps they be not absolutely and universally prohibited. In a thousand of these instances you must learn to deny yourself,

or you cannot be Christ's disciple, Matt. xvi. 24.

You must also lay your account to find great difficulties from the world; from its manners, customs, and examples. The things of the world will hinder you one way, and the men of the world another. Perhaps you may meet with much less assistance in religion than you are now ready to expect from good men. The present generation of them is generally so cautious to avoid every thing that looks like ostentation, and there seems something so unsupportably dreadful in the charge of enthusiasm, that you will find most of your Christian brethren studying to conceal their virtue and their piety, much more than others study to conceal their vice and their profaneness. But while, unless your situation be singularly happy, you meet with very little aid one way, you will, no doubt, find great opposition another. The enemies of religion will be bold and active in their assaults, while many of its friends seem unconcerned: and one sinner will probably exert himself more to corrupt you, than ten Christians to secure and save you. They, who have once been your companions in sin, will try a thousand artful methods to allure you back again to their forsaken society: some of them, perhaps, with an appearance of tender fondness, and many more by the almost irresistible art of banter and ridicule. That boasted test of right and wrong, as it has been wantonly called, will be tried upon you, perhaps without any regard to decency, or even to common humanity. You will be derided and insulted by those, whose esteem and affection you naturally desire; and may find much more propriety than you imagine, in that expression of the Apostle, the trial of cruel mockings, Heb. xi. 36, which some fear more than either sword or flames. This persecution of the tongue you must expect to go through, and perhaps may be branded as a lunatic, for no other cause than that you begin to exercise your reason to purpose, and will not join with those that are destroying their own souls in their wild career of folly and madness.

And it is not at all improbable, that in the meantime Satan may be doing his utmost to discourage and distress you. He will no doubt raise in your imagination the most tempting idea of the gratifications, the indulgences, and the companions, you

are obliged to forsake; and give you the most discouraging and terrifying view of the difficulties, severities, and dangers, which are (as he will persuade you) inseparable from religion. He will not fail to represent God himself, the fountain of goodness and happiness, as a hard master, whom it is impossible to please. He will perhaps fill you with the most distressful fears, and with cruel and insolent malice glory over you as his slave, when he knows you are the Lord's freeman. At one time he will study by his vile suggestions to interrupt you in your duties, as if they gave him an additional power over you: at another time he will endeavour to weary you of your devotion, by influencing you to prolong it to an immoderate and tedious length, lest his power should be exerted upon you when it ceases. In short, this practised deceiver has artifices which it would require whole volumes to display, with particular cautions against each. And he will follow you with malicious arts and pursuits to the very end of your pilgrimage: and will leave no method unattempted, which may be likely to weaken your hands, and to sadden your heart; that if, through the gracious interposition of God, he cannot prevent your final happiness, he may at least impair your peace and your usefulness, as you are passing to it.

This is what the people of God feel; and what you will feel in some degree or other, if you have your lot and your portion among them. But after all, be not discouraged: Christ is the captain of your salvation, Heb. ii. 10. It is delightful to consider him under this view. When we take a survey of these hosts of enemies, we may lift up our head amidst them all, and say, more and greater is he that is with us, than all those that are against us, 2 Kings vi. 16. . . .

Amidst all the opposition of earth and hell, look upward, and look forward; and you will feel your heart animated by the view. Your General is near: he is near to aid you; he is near to reward you.—When you feel the temptations press the hardest, think of him who endured even the cross itself for your rescue. View the fortitude of your divine leader, and endeavour to march on in his steps. Harken to his voice, for he proclaims it aloud, *Behold, I come quickly, and my reward is with me*, Rev. xxii. 12. *Be thou faithful*

*unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life, Rev. ii. 10.* DR. DODDRIDGE.

*The Conflict in Christians between the Flesh and the Spirit.*

*And these are contrary one to another; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would, Gal. v. 17.*

These two captains or leaders, saith he, the flesh and the Spirit, are one against another in your body, so that ye cannot do what ye would. And this place witnesseth plainly that Paul writeth these things to the faithful, that is, to the church believing in Christ, baptized, justified, renewed, and having full forgiveness of sins. Yet notwithstanding he saith that she hath flesh rebelling against the Spirit. After the same manner he speaketh of himself in the seventh to the Romans: *I (saith he) am carnal, and sold under sin. And again, I see another law in my members rebelling against the law of my mind, and leading me captive under the law of sin which is in my members. Also, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? &c.*

Here, not only the schoolmen, but also some of the old fathers, are much troubled, seeking how they may excuse Paul. For it seemeth unto them absurd and unseemly to say, that that elect vessel of Christ should have sin. But we credit Paul's own words, wherein he plainly confesseth that he is sold under sin, that he is led captive of sin, that he hath a law in his members rebelling against him, and that in the flesh he serveth the law of sin. Here again they answer, that the Apostle speaketh in the person of the wicked. But the wicked do not complain of the rebellion of their flesh, of any battle or conflict, or of the captivity and bondage of sin: for sin mightily reigneth in them. This is therefore the very complaint of Paul and of all the faithful. Wherefore they have done very wickedly which have excused Paul and all the faithful to have no sin. For by this persuasion (which proceedeth of ignorance of the doctrine of faith) they have robbed the church of a singular consolation; they have abolished the forgiveness of sins, and made Christ of none effect.

Wherefore, when Paul saith, *I see another law in my members, &c.* he denieth not that he hath flesh, and the vices of the flesh in him. It is likely, therefore, that he

felt sometimes the motions of carnal lust. But yet, no doubt, these motions were well suppressed in him by the great and grievous afflictions and temptations both of mind and body, wherewith he was in a manner continually exercised and vexed, as his epistles do declare: or if he at any time felt the lusts of the flesh, wrath, impatience, and such-like, yet he resisted them by the Spirit, and suffered not those motions to bear rule in him. Therefore let us in no wise suffer such comfortable places (whereby Paul describeth the battle of the flesh against the Spirit in his own body) to be corrupted with such foolish glosses. The schoolmen, the monks, and such other, never felt any spiritual temptations, and therefore they fought only for the repressing and overcoming of fleshly lust, and being proud of that victory which they never yet obtained, they thought themselves far better and more holy than other men. I will not say, that under this holy pretence they nourished and maintained all kinds of horrible sins, as dissension, pride, hatred, disdain, and despising of their neighbours, trust in their own righteousness, presumption, contempt of all godliness and of the word of God, infidelity, blasphemy, and such-like. Against these sins they never fought, nay rather they took them to be no sins at all; they put righteousness in the keeping of their foolish and wicked vows, and unrighteousness in the neglecting and contemning of the same.

But this must be our ground and anchorhold, that Christ is our only and perfect righteousness. If we have nothing whereunto we may trust, yet these three things, (as Paul saith,) faith, hope, and love, do remain. Therefore we must always believe, and always hope; we must always take hold of Christ, as the head and foundation of our righteousness. *He that believeth in him shall not be ashamed*, Rom. ix. 33. Moreover, we must labour to be outwardly righteous also; that is to say, not to consent to the flesh, which always enticeth us to some evil; but to resist it by the Spirit. We must not be overcome with impatience for the unthankfulness and contempt of the people, which abuseth the Christian liberty; but through the Spirit, we must overcome this and all other temptations. Look then, how much we strive against the flesh by the Spirit, so much are we outwardly righteous. Albeit this

righteousness doth not commend us before God. . . .

Let no man marvel therefore or be dismayed, when he feeleth in his body this battle of the flesh against the Spirit; but let him pluck up his heart, and comfort himself with these words of Paul, *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit*. Also, *These are contrary one to another, so that ye do not those things that ye would*. For by these sentences he comforteth them that be tempted. As if he should say, It is impossible for you to follow the guiding of the Spirit in all things without any feeling or hinderance of the flesh: nay, the flesh will resist, and so resist and hinder you, that ye cannot do those things that gladly ye would. Here it shall be enough if ye resist the flesh, and fulfil not the lust thereof; that is to say, if ye follow the Spirit and not the flesh, which easily is overthrown by impatience, coveteth to revenge, biteth, grudgeth, hateth God, is angry with him, despaireth, &c. Therefore when a man feeleth this battle of the flesh, let him not be discouraged therewith, but let him resist in spirit, and say, I am a sinner, and I feel sin in me; for I have not yet put off the flesh, in which sin dwelleth so long as it liveth: but I will obey the Spirit, and not the flesh: that is, I will by faith and hope lay hold upon Christ, and by his word I will raise up myself, and being so raised up, I will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh.

It is very profitable for the godly to know this, and to bear it well in mind; for it wonderfully comforteth them when they are tempted. When I was a monk I thought by and by that I was utterly cast away, if at any time I felt the lust of the flesh; that is to say, if I felt any evil motion, fleshly lust, wrath, hatred, or envy, against any brother. I assayed many ways to help to quiet my conscience, but it would not be; for the concupiscence and lust of my flesh did always return, so that I could not rest, but was continually vexed with these thoughts: This or that sin thou hast committed: thou art infected with envy, with impatience, and such other sins: therefore thou art entered into this holy order in vain, and all thy good works are unprofitable. If then I had rightly understood these sentences of St. Paul, *The flesh lusteth contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit contrary to the flesh; and these two are one against another, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would do*; I should

not have so miserably tormented myself, but should have thought and said to myself, as now commonly I do, Martin, thou shalt not utterly be without sin, for thou hast flesh; thou shalt therefore feel the battle thereof; according to that saying of St. Paul, *The flesh resisteth the Spirit*. Despair not, therefore, but resist it strongly and fulfil not the lust thereof. Thus doing thou art not under the law.

I remember that Staupitius was wont to say, 'I have vowed unto God above a thousand times that I would become a better man: but I never performed that which I vowed. Hereafter I will make no such vow: for I have now learned by experience, that I am not able to perform it. Unless therefore God be favourable and merciful unto me for Christ's sake, and grant unto me a blessed and a happy hour when I shall depart out of this miserable life, I shall not be able, with all my vows and all my good deeds, to stand before him.' This was not only a true, but also a godly and a holy desperation; and this must they all confess, both with mouth and heart, which will be saved. For the godly trust not to their own righteousness, but say with David, *Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall none that liveth be justified*, Ps. cxliii. 2. Again, *If thou, O Lord, shouldest straitly mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* Ps. cxxx. 3. They look unto Christ their reconciler, who gave his life for their sins. Moreover, they know that the remnant of sin which is in their flesh is not laid to their charge, but freely pardoned. Notwithstanding, in the mean while they fight in spirit against the flesh, lest they should fulfil the lusts thereof. And although they feel the flesh to rage and rebel against the Spirit, and themselves also do fall sometimes into sin through infirmity, yet are they not discouraged, nor think therefore that their state and kind of life, and the works which are done according to their calling, displease God; but they raise up themselves by faith. . . .

But here may some man say, that it is a dangerous matter to teach that a man is not condemned, if by and by he overcome not the motions and passions of the flesh which he feeleth. For when this doctrine is taught amongst the common people, it maketh them careless, negligent, and slothful. This is it which I said a little before, that if we teach faith, then carnal



be spread before my God, in the happy hour when I get near him.

DR. WATTS.

Sometimes thou introducest me into an uncommon affection, into a sweetness past the power of description, which, were it perfected in me, I should not see what life would want to complete its felicity. But I sink back by the weight of misery, and am held entangled.

AUGUSTINE.

If revelation raise us up to the third heaven, the messenger of Satan must presently buffet us, and the thorn of the flesh fetch us down. Thus, now and then a spark falls on my heart, and while I gaze upon it, it dies, or rather my cold heart quenches it.

BAXTER.

In Rom. viii. 7, the Apostle calls the flesh the carnal mind, and he says, *It is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be*; since it is enmity itself there is no reconciling it; it will not, nay it cannot, obey God, but is ever lusting and rebelling against his law. The nature of the battle is described at length in Rom. vii. The chapter consists of three parts; first, the believer's liberty from the law to ver. 6. Secondly, he answers some objections made against the law from its nature and properties, and that in his own person, because it had been the means of bringing him to the right knowledge of sin, ver. 7. and sin, being discovered by the law, through the corruption of nature, raged and rebelled the more in him, ver. 8. and the law had made him sensible of God's anger against sin, and of his deserving death and hell for it, ver. 9 to 14: and from thence to the end of the chapter he describes the conflict between the old man and the new; the one consenting to the law, and the other resisting the law. In this conflict there were three sharp attacks; in the first he found in himself two contrary principles of action always resisting each other, the old man fighting against the new, from ver. 14 to 18. Secondly, when the will of the new man was good, through the opposition of the old man, it had not the desired effect, ver. 19, 20; and, thirdly, he felt in himself two contrary laws, both requiring obedience, the law of the members warring and rebelling

against the law of God written in the renewed mind: for no sooner did his mind, guided by the Holy Spirit, set about any thing which God's law commanded, but he found the law of the members making a strong resistance. This he groaned under as a heavy burden, and was humbled for it before God, expecting pardon from him and victory every day, and perfect deliverance at last.

I cannot enlarge upon this chapter. Turn to it, and read it over upon the plan which I have here laid down, remembering all along, that St. Paul is describing himself. He ten times says it is himself he is speaking of from ver. 7 to ver. 14, where he is shewing of what use the law had been to him, when he was first convinced of sin, and from thence to the end he mentions himself thirty-eight times. I the Apostle Paul, I myself, my very self, and not another; I myself am now, at this present, at the very time of writing this; I myself, whom the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made free from the law of sin and death; I myself, to whom now there is no condemnation, for I am in Christ Jesus, and I walk after the Spirit, am still at war with sin that dwelleth in me, with the old man, with the flesh, with the law of the members, with the body of sin. Although I have a new nature, and God is on my side, yet it is a hard and a sharp battle. I find it so. The length of it makes it still more painful, and forces me to cry out, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Paul was not out of God's favour, or accursed, but, as the word rendered *wretched* means, he was weary and tired with this continual fighting, troubled with the filthy motions of sin rising and striving and rebelling in him, and giving him no rest; this was such a hard warfare, that he was ever looking out and praying, *Who shall deliver me?* He meant wholly, perfectly, deliver me from this corruption. He sighed for it, not because he doubted of an absolute deliverance, but because he had sure and certain hope of it; not because he was ignorant who his deliverer was, but because he had steadfast faith in him. *Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ.* This comforted him, and kept him fighting on with courage. He knew that he should gain the victory, and through Christ; not through his own works, but

through faith in the life and death, in the blood and righteousness, of Christ, he should at last be more than conqueror.

Since this was the case with the Apostle, who can expect a discharge from this warfare until death? What! says one, is it to continue so long? Yes. The Scripture is very clear to this point, as may be easily shewn.

The seat of the corruption of the old man, or of the flesh, is not only in our nature, but is also our very nature itself. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, altogether carnal and corrupt. It is a filthy fountain, always sending forth impure streams; and therefore, while the believer is in the body, he must either be fighting against the flesh, or else be led captive by it. We that are, says Paul, in this tabernacle of flesh, do groan, being burdened with sin and sorrow. And when did they expect an end of their groaning, and rest from their burdens? Not till the tabernacle was dissolved by death. *Ourselves*, says he, *who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.* The body will be redeemed from the grave, and raised like the glorious body of Jesus Christ: this is promised, and this we wait for, and, until death deliver us from this mortal corruptible body, we shall be groaning under the burden of it. This was St. Paul's case. He had long sighed to be discharged from his warfare, and, like an old weary tired soldier, he wished the hard tedious campaign was ended, that he might enter into rest: but hear with what joy he at last cries out, *I have fought the good fight.* Have fought it? What! is the battle over? Yes, just over. *I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand; I have finished my course.* My battle and my life are finished together; and so must thine, reader. Thou art to resist unto blood striving against sin; for thou art called to fight the good fight of faith, until thou lay hold of eternal life. Since thou art a believer, however weak, and hast a new man in thee, as well as an old, they will be fighting against each other, till thou finish thy course: and, if this discourage thee, consider what God has spoken concerning this warfare, and what exceeding great and precious promises he has made to them who are engaged in it. REV. W. ROMAINE.

We have heard from Scripture some of the victories of faith over sin in its pollution and in its guilt: but there is still a hard warfare to be maintained against its dominion; for it reigneth absolutely in the children of disobedience, and it never ceaseth to strive for mastery in the children of God; who have an evil nature still; an old man, who is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and who is to be put off every day, denied in his desires, mortified in his affections, and crucified in his appetites. Thus the commandment runs, *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth.* And the new man, who is called to this warfare is ordered to make use of Christ's fulness for promised courage, and strength, and victory: for without Christ he can do nothing. Sin is himself; he is a body of sin; and he has not only to fight against himself, but also against principalities and powers, hosts of foes, united under the banner of the god of this world, trying all their cunning, and all their force to bring the believer back into the bondage of corruption: and what he has of his own is on their side. His worst foe is his indwelling sin, which has a complete body with all its members and lusts, always enticing to something unlawful, and tempting to the commission of it. Every faculty is ready to become an instrument of unrighteousness unto sin. It is an absolute tyrant, who rules his slaves with the most cruel rigour, keeping them captive to his will, although nothing but destruction and misery be in their ways.

Thus original sin is described in the ninth article of our church: It is the fault and corruption of every man born of Adam; and, notwithstanding it still remaineth in the regenerate, yet there is a promise of daily and of complete victory over the tyrant. Thus it is written, *Sin shall not have dominion over you, because ye are not under the law, but under grace.* Once sin had full dominion, but it is taken away by the Spirit of Christ: not entirely destroyed, as to its being, but as to its ruling power—Dethroned in the judgment, there seen as it is, exceedingly sinful, exceedingly dangerous—Dethroned in the conscience; the believer no longer under the law, but under grace, is freed from condemnation—Dethroned in the will: *Not my will, Lord, but thine be done*—Dethroned in the heart: *I hate all evil thoughts, but thy law do I love: O what*

*love have I unto thy law*—Dethroned in the life, crucified with its affections and lusts, by the power of the cross of Jesus. It is not quite dead, but it is put to a lingering death, kept upon the cross, dying daily. And thus the sin, which is pardoned through the blood of Christ, is conquered by the arm of Christ, as it is written, *He will subdue our iniquities*, and faith in his promised help keeps them under, subdues them effectually, so that they do not reign in the mortal body to obey them in the lusts thereof.

REV. W. ROMAINE.

How various and changeable are the frames of the Christian's mind! There are times when he feels a desire to take his flight to another world, having such views of its glories and such a foretaste of its pleasures. At other times his soul cleaves to the dust; all is dark around him, and all is dead within him; no light from above, and no enjoyment of religion in the heart. This latter state of mind not unfrequently succeeds the other, and has often, through sin, been occasioned by it. Great elevations we cannot long enjoy in this world without injury to the soul. A continual sunshine would not suit our condition; and even an occasional sunshine, though necessary to prevent despondency, is scarcely ever vouchsafed without its being abused in some way or other by the busy working of sin. Pride or spiritual sloth will insinuate itself, and convert the highest favours of heaven into the greatest evils. This would have been the case with Paul, when favoured with a sight of things ineffable, had not God anticipated the evil effect by a temptation which made and kept him sensible of his own weakness. Pride would otherwise have crept into his soul, and might have been the cause of an awful downfall. As soon as this enemy shews himself, a cloud veils the glory before seen, and the *feast of good things* is withdrawn; and thus what he is attempting to convert into an occasion of sin, is removed. There is nothing that cleaves to man more closely than self and pride. He is ever disposed to attribute to himself what does not belong to him. *Self-dependent* he is tempted to be, even in spiritual things. But when this spirit creeps in, God, by withdrawing his influences, makes him know that he is nothing.

REV. T. CHARLES.

*In what the Christian conflict consists.*

It is, however, requisite more particularly to enumerate and consider the enemies, whom the Christian soldier is called to encounter, if we would fully understand the important subject. The Apostle having said, *The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would*; proceeds to shew what are the works of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit, Gal. v. 17—23, from which enumeration it is evident that the *flesh* signifies our old nature, as born of Adam's fallen race, with all its propensities, animal and intellectual, as they are contrary to the spiritual commands of God: and that *the spirit*, as striving against it, signifies the new principle infused and supported by the Holy Spirit, renewing our souls to holiness, and so teaching, disposing, and enabling us to love and serve God: *for that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.*

If we then carefully examine the nature of man, we shall find that a disposition to depart from God, and idolatrously to love and seek felicity from the creature, is common to our whole species: and from this general principle, differently modified according to the different constitutions, educations, habits, connexions, or circumstances of men, some are more prone to avarice, some to sensual indulgence, some to ambition, and others to malignant passions, with every possible variation and combination. These propensities, being excited by temptation, gathering force by gratification, triumphing over shame and conscience, and irritated by the interference of those who pursue the same objects, hurry men into every kind of excess; burst forth into all the variety of crimes which have prevailed in every age and nation; and produces all sorts of immorality, and impiety, blasphemy, and other daring offences, against the almighty Governor of the universe. And, as he who attempts to force his way against a torrent best knows its strength; so none are so well acquainted with the power of corrupt propensities and habits, as they who resolutely endeavour to overcome and extirpate them. When, therefore, holy principles have been implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God, and a man sees the

urgent necessity, and feels the ardent desire of *crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts*; then his conflict begins: for pride, anger, envy, malice, avarice, or sensual lusts, being no longer allowed to domineer, abide, like a dethroned tyrant, and have a strong party in the soul; and consequently they oppose and counteract the best desires and purposes of the believer, and engage him in a perpetual contest. At some times they find him off his guard, and gain a temporary advantage, which makes way for deep repentance; at all times they impede his progress, mingle pollution with his services, and thwart and interrupt his endeavours to glorify God and adorn the Gospel. These things are generally most painfully experienced, in respect of such sins as had by any means previously acquired the ascendancy, and in proportion to the degree in which watchfulness and prayer are remitted: but even those evil propensities, from which he before thought himself most free, will be found, on trial, to possess great power in his soul. . . .

But we should further recollect the Apostle's words, *We wrestle not against flesh and blood only, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*, Eph. vi. 10—18. The Scriptures continually lead our thoughts to these invisible enemies, the fallen angels, or evil spirits. A kingdom of darkness and iniquity is spoken of, as established under Satan the arch-apostate, by vast numbers of his associates in rebellion. These differ in capacity and influence, but are all replete with pride, enmity, envy, deceit, and every detestable propensity; and their natural sagacity and powers are increased by long experience in the work of destruction. The entrance of sin by Adam's fall is ascribed to their ambition, envy, malice, and subtlety: and ungodly men are uniformly considered as their *slaves*, yea as their *children*. Satan is called *the god and prince of this world*: this old serpent *deceiveth the nations*, yea, *the whole world*; and he *taketh sinners captive at his will*. Conversion is stated to consist in *turning men from Satan to God*. This *adversary, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*; and he *transforms himself into an angel of light* to deceive the unwary. The whole company of evil spirits are repre-

sented as counteracting, by every possible effort, the endeavours of God's servants to promote his cause; as harassing those by temptations whom they cannot destroy; and as desiring *to sift* and assault them. They are spoken of as putting into the hearts of men all kinds of wickedness, and as *filling their hearts*; as being the original authors of all heresies, persecutions, delusions, and apostasies; and, in short, as *working in the children of disobedience*. . . .

Again, the believer is also engaged in an arduous conflict with this evil world, which is Satan's grand engine in all his stratagems and assaults. He uses the things of the world as his baits, or proposed premiums, by which to allure men to disobedience: and, *All these*, or some of these, *will I give thee*, is still one grand argument in his temptations. Nor is this the case only when the conduct suggested is evil in itself, and wealth, honour, or pleasure is annexed to it; but more commonly he prevails by seducing us into an inexpedient or excessive use or pursuit of worldly things. Thus ambushments are concealed in every business, connexion, relation, and recreation, or company: and the world prevails against us by inducing us to waste our time, to mispend what is intrusted to us, to omit opportunities of usefulness, and to indulge inordinate or idolatrous affection towards creatures.—The evil things of the world, as we deem them, are likewise employed by Satan to deter us from the profession of our faith, and the performance of our duty. Thus many are seduced into sinful compliances, and led to renounce or dissemble their religion, lest they should be ridiculed, reproached, or forsaken by their friends, or exposed to hardships and persecutions; while they flatter themselves, that this *prudence* will enable them to do the more good, till the event confutes the vain imagination. Near relations, beloved friends, liberal benefactors, admired superiors, as well as powerful opposers, are often in this respect dangerous foes. Riches and poverty, youth and old age, reputation and authority, or the contrary, have each their several snares; while politeness and rude insolence, company and retirement, assault the soul in different ways.—These few hints may shew, in what the believer's conflict consists, and to what continual dangers it must expose him.

REV. T. SCOTT.

2 K

*How this conflict is to be maintained.*

WHEN, indeed, we seriously consider the variety of those obstacles which interrupt our course; the number, power, and malice of our enemies; the sinfulness and treachery of our own hearts; our weakness, and our exposed condition; we may well say, *Who is sufficient for these things?* or what hope is there of success in this unequal contest? But a proper attention to the Scriptures will convince us, that there is no ground for despondency, or even for discouragement; as the Lord assures us that he will strengthen, assist, and uphold his redeemed people, and never forsake them. We ought not therefore to fear our enemies, because he will be with us; and *if God be for us, who can be against us?* Or who can doubt, that *He who is in us, is greater than he who is in the world?* This was typically intimated in the promises made to Israel respecting their wars with the Canaanites and other nations, which were shadows and figures of *the good fight of faith*. Exod. xiv. 14. Deut. vii. 17—19. xx. 1. Josh. i. 5—7. x. 25. 1 Sam. xiv. 6. 2 Chron. xiv. 11. Is. xli. 10—16. liv. 15—17. We are, therefore, exhorted to *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might; for they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; and Jehovah, in whom is everlasting strength, is become our salvation.* All power in heaven and earth is vested in *the Lord our Righteousness*. He is *head over all things to his church*: and his servants have always found, that in proportion as they simply trusted in him, *they could do all things*, and that *when they were weak then were they strong; for the power of Christ rested upon them*, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10. Phil. iv. 13. He restrains and moderates, as he sees good, the assaults of our outward enemies, or confounds their devices, and defeats their deep-laid machinations: all providential dispensations are directed by him: nor can any tribulation or temptation pass the bounds he assigns, though all the powers of earth and hell should combine against one feeble saint: while the Holy Spirit communicates strength to our faith, fear, love, hope, patience, and every principle of the new man; imparts strong consolations and heavenly joys; effectually restrains the energy of corrupt passions, and disposes us to self-denial,

to bear the cross, to persevere in well-doing; and to dread sin and separation<sup>n</sup> from Christ, or even dishonouring him, more than any other evil that can befall us. Supported, strengthened, and encouraged in this manner, believers have in every age been enabled to *fight the good fight of faith, and to overcome every foe, by the blood of the Lamb, and the word of their testimony; and have not loved their lives unto the death*, Rev. xii. 11. Nay, they have generally acquitted themselves most honourably, when their adversaries were most formidable, and their temptations apparently most invincible; because they were then most simply dependent, and most fervent in praying for the all-sufficient grace of the Lord Jesus, and most steadfast in contemplating his sufferings and the glory that followed.

In order to maintain this conflict with good hope of success, we must *take to ourselves, and put on the whole armour of God*, Eph. vi. 10—13. 1 Thess. v. 8. Conscious *sincerity* in our profession of the Gospel must be as the *girdle* of our loins, without which we shall be entangled and embarrassed in all our conduct: an habitual obedient regard to our Lord's commands, as the rule of *righteousness*, must be our *breastplate* in facing our foes: while a distinct knowledge and cordial reception of the *gospel of peace*, and the way of access, pardon, reconciliation, and acceptance in the divine Saviour, must be *the shoes of our feet*, our only effectual preparation for firmly standing our ground, or comfortably marching to meet our assailants. Above all, *faith*, or a firm belief of the truths and reliance on the promises of God, must be our *shield*, with which we may ward off and extinguish the *fiery darts of Satan*, and prevent their fatal effects. *Hope* of present support and heavenly felicity must be as a *helmet* to cover our head in the day of battle; and with the plain testimonies, precepts, promises, and instructions of the word of God, as with *the sword of the Spirit*, we must, after our Lord's example, repel the tempter, and so resist him that he may flee from us. In short, *the weapons of our warfare are not carnal*; for worldly wisdom, philosophical reasonings, and our own native strength and resolution, like Saul's armour when put upon David, can only encumber us. But when, conscious of our weakness and unworthiness, and

distrusting our own hearts, we *strive against sin, looking unto Jesus*, relying on his power, truth, and grace, and observing his directions; when we aim to do his will, to seek his glory, and copy his example; then indeed we are armed for the battle: and, however men may despise our weapons, (as Goliath did David the shepherd, with his staff, his sling, and stones,) we shall not be put to shame in the event, but shall be made more than conquerors over every inward and outward foe. This armour is prepared in Christ, *our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, and in *his fulness of grace*; we take it to ourselves by *the prayer of faith*, by searching and meditating on the Scriptures, and attendance on the means of grace. By watchfulness, sobriety, habitual circumspection, and caution, we put it on and keep it bright: and thus we are continually prepared for the conflict, and not liable to be surprised unawares, or to fall into the ambushments of our vigilant enemies. Matt. xxvi. 41. Luke xxi. 34—36. Rom. xiii. 11—14. 1 Pet. v. 8, 9.: and, when we live at peace with our brethren, and pray for, warn, counsel, and encourage them also; we *fight the good fight*, as a part of the great army, which is enlisted under the Redeemer's standard, to wage war against sin, the world, and the powers of darkness.

REV. T. SCOTT.

*Greatness of the Christian's spiritual trials and warfare.*

Who can reflect upon his present state and not presently be in pangs? The troubles that follow humanity are many and great, those that follow Christianity more numerous and grievous. The sickness, pains, losses, disappointments, and whatsoever afflictions that are in the Apostle's language, human, or common to men, 1 Cor. x. 13. (as are all the external sufferings of Christians, in nature and kind, though they are liable to them upon an account peculiar to themselves, which there the Apostle intimates,) are none of our greatest evils. . . . These things are little considerable in comparison of the more spiritual grievances of Christians, as such; that is, those that afflict our souls while we are (under the conduct of Christ) designing for a blessed eternity; if we indeed make that our business, and do seriously intend our spirits in order hereto.

The darkness of our beclouded minds; the glimmering, ineffectual apprehension we have of the most important things; the inconsistency of our shattered thoughts, when we would apply them to spiritual objects; the great difficulty of working off an ill frame of heart, and the no less difficulty of retaining a good: our being so frequently tossed as between heaven and hell; when we sometimes think ourselves to have even attained and hope to descend no more, and are all on a sudden plunged in the ditch, so as that our own clothes might abhor us; fall so low into an earthly temper, that we can like nothing heavenly or divine, and because we cannot, are enforced justly most of all to dislike ourselves! Are these things little with us? How can we forbear to cry out of the depths, to the Father of our spirits, that he would pity and relieve his own offspring? Yea, are we not weary of our crying; and yet more weary of holding in? How do repelled temptations return again, and vanquished corruptions recover strength! We know not when our work is done. We are miserable that we need to be always watching, and more miserable that we cannot watch, but are so often surprised and overcome of evil. We say sometimes with ourselves, we will seek relief in retirement, but we cannot retire from ourselves; or in converse with godly friends, but they sometimes prove snares to us, and we to them, or we hear but our own miseries repeated in their complaints. Would we pray? How faint is the breath we utter! How long is it before we can get our souls possessed with any becoming apprehensions of God, or lively sense of our own concernments! Would we meditate? We sometimes go about to compose our thoughts, but we may as well essay to hold the winds in our fist. If we venture forth into the world, how do our senses betray us! how are we mocked with their impostures! Their nearer objects become with us the only realities, and eternal things are all vanished into airy shadows. Reason and faith are laid asleep, and our sense dictates to us what we are to believe and do, as if it were our only guide and lord.

REV. JOHN HOWE.

Christianity is well termed a warfare; for a warfare it is, wherein no danger can be prevented, no enemy conquered, no

victory obtained, without much courage and resolution. I have not only many outward enemies to grapple with, but I have myself, my worst enemy, to encounter and subdue. As for those enemies which are but near me, by the assistance of God's Spirit I can make pretty good shift to keep them at the sword's point: but this enemy that is gotten within me, has so often foiled and disarmed me, that I have reason to say, as David did of his enemies, *It is too strong for me*: and as he said of the chief of his, *I shall one day fall by the hands of Saul*, so have I too much occasion to say, I shall fall by myself, as being myself the greatest enemy to my own spiritual interest and concerns. How necessary is it then that I should raise and muster up all my force and courage, put on my spiritual armour, and make myself *strong in the Lord and in the power of his might*! I know I must strive, before I can *enter in at the strait gate*; I must win the crown, before I can wear it; and be a member of the church militant, before I be admitted into the church triumphant. In a word, I must go through a solitary wilderness and conquer many enemies, before I come to the land of Canaan; or else I must never be possessed of it. What then? Shall I lose my glory, to balk my duty? Shall I let go my glorious and eternal possession, to save myself from a seeming hardship, which the devil would persuade me to be a trouble and an affliction? Alas! if Christ had laid aside the great work of my redemption, to avoid the undergoing of God's anger and man's malice, what a miserable condition had I been in! And, therefore, whatever taunts and reproaches I meet with from the presumptuous and profane, the infidel and atheistical reprobates of the age; let them laugh at my profession, or mock at what they are pleased to call my preciseness; let them defraud me of my just rights, or traduce and bereave me of my good name and reputation; let them vent the utmost of their poisonous malice and envy against me; I have this comfortable reflection still to support me, that if I suffer all this for Christ's sake, it is in the cause of one who suffered a thousand times more for mine, and, therefore, it ought to be matter of joy and triumph, rather than of grief and dejection to me; especially considering that *these my light afflictions, which are but for a moment, will work out*

*for me a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. Upon the prospect of which, I firmly resolve, notwithstanding the growing strength of sin and the overbearing prevalency of my own corrupt affections, to undertake all duties and undergo all miseries, that God, in his infinite wisdom, thinks fit to lay upon me or exercise my patience in. BP. BEVERIDGE.

The Christian's life is a continual wrestling, from his spiritual birth till his natural death; from the hour when he first sets his face to Heaven, till he shall set his foot in Heaven. No condition wherein the Christian here below is quiet. Is it prosperity, or adversity? Here is work for both hands, to keep pride and security down in the one, faith and patience up in the other; no place which the Christian can call privileged ground. . . . No duty can be performed without wrestling: the Christian needs his sword as much as his trowel. He wrestles with a body of flesh; he cannot go his journey without it, and much ado to go with it. If the flesh be kept high, then it is wanton, and will not obey; if low, then it is weak, and soon tires. He wrestles with a body of sin: this mutters and murmurs when the soul is taking up any duty; sometimes keeps him from duty. It is true indeed, grace sways the sceptre in such a soul; yet the unregenerate part takes advantage when grace is not on its watch to disturb its government, and shut it out from duty; and when it cannot shut from duty, yet then is the Christian wofully yoked with it in duty. Thus we see the Christian is assailed on every side by his enemy; and how can it be other, when the seeds of war are laid deep in the natures of both, which can never be rooted up till the devil cease to be a devil, sin to be sin, and the saint to be a saint? Sin will lust against grace, and grace draw upon sin whenever they meet.

GURNALL.

*The Christian's warfare from Satan's temptations.*

In his spiritual estate, if he be a weak Christian, Satan assaulteth him with perpetual doubts and fears touching his election, conversion, adoption, perseverance, Christian liberty, strength against corruptions, companies, temptations, persecutions, &c. &c. if he be a strong Christian, he laboureth to draw him unto self-confidence, spiritual

pride, contempt of the weak, neglect of further proficiency, and the like. There is no natural part or faculty, which is not aimed at likewise by the malice of Satan; for Christ when he comes, takes possession of the whole man, and therefore Satan sets himself against the whole man. Corporeal and sensitive faculties are tempted either to sinful representations, letting in and transmitting the provisions of lust unto the heart, by gazing and glutting themselves on the objects of the world: or to sinful executions, finishing and letting out those lusts which have been conceived in the heart. The phantasy is tempted by satanical injections and immutations to be the forge of loose, vain, unprofitable, and unclean thoughts. The understanding, to earthly wisdom, vanity, infidelity, prejudices, mispersuasions, fleshly reasonings, vain speculations and curiosities, &c. The will, to stiffness, resistance, dislike of holy things, and pursuit of the world. The conscience, to deadness, immobility, and a stupid benumbedness, to slavish terrors and evidences of hell, to superstitious bondage, to carnal security, to desperate conclusions. The affections, to independence, distraction, excess, precipitancy, &c. In temporal conditions, there is no estate of health, wealth, peace, honour, estimation, or the contraries unto these; no relation of husband, father, magistrate, subject, &c. unto which Satan hath not such suitable suggestions, as by the advantage of fleshly corruptions may take from them occasion to draw a man from God. Lastly, in regard of our actions and employments, whether they be divine, such as respect God, as acts of piety, in reading, hearing, meditating, and studying his Word, in calling upon his name, and the like, or such as respect ourselves, as acts of temperance and sobriety, personal examinations, and more particular acquaintance with our own hearts; or such as respect others, as acts of righteousness, charity, and edification. Or whether they be actions natural, such as are requisite to the preservation of our being, as sleep and diet; or actions civil, in our callings or recreations, in all these Satan laboureth either to pervert us in the performance of them, or to divert us from it. There is then no condition, faculty, relation, or action of a Christian man, the which is not always under the eye and envy of a most raging, wise, and industrious enemy. And, therefore, great rea-

son there is, that Christians should be military men, well instructed in the whole armour of God, that they may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, and to quench all his fiery darts. It is our calling to wrestle against principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places, to resist the devil, to strive against sin, to mortify earthly members, to destroy the body of sin, to deny ourselves, to contradict the reasonings of the flesh, to check and controul the stirrings of concupiscence, to resist and subdue the desires of our evil hearts, to withstand and answer the assaults of Satan, to outface the scorn, and despise the flatteries, of the present world, in all things to endure hardness as the soldiers of Jesus Christ. Our cause is righteous, our Captain is wise and puissant, our service honourable, our victory certain, our reward massy and eternal, so that in all respects great encouragements we have to be voluntaries in such war, the issue whereof is our enemy's perdition, our Master's honour, and our own salvation.

BR. REYNOLDS.

*Saints of greatest growth in Grace  
may fall.*

THE fearful eruptions of actual sins that have been in the lives of believers, are the most of them in the lives of men that were not of the lowest form or ordinary sort, but of men that had a peculiar eminency in them on the account of their walking with God in their generation. Such were Noah, Lot, David, Hezekiah, and others. They were not men of an ordinary size, but higher than their brethren by the shoulders and upwards in profession, yea, in real holiness. And surely that must needs be of a mighty efficacy that could hurry such giants in the way of God into such abominable sins as they fell into. An ordinary engine could never have turned them out of the course of their obedience. It was a poison that no athletic constitution of spiritual health, no antidote could withstand.

And these very men fell not into their great sins at the beginning of their profession, when they had had but little experience of the goodness of God, of the sweetness and pleasantness of obedience, of the power and craft of sin, of its impulsions, solicitations, and surprisals, but after a long course of walking with God, and



acquaintance with all these things, together with innumerable motives unto watchfulness. Noah, according to the lives of men in those days of the world, had walked uprightly with God some hundreds of years before he was so surprised as he was, Gen. ix. Righteous Lot seems to have been towards the end of his days, ere he defiled himself with the abominations recorded. David, in a short life, had as much experience of grace and sin, and as much close, spiritual communion with God, as ever had any of the sons of men, before he was cast to the ground by this law of sin. So was it with Hezekiah in his degree, which was none of the meanest. Now to set upon such persons, so well acquainted with its power and deceit, so armed and provided against it, that had been conquerors over it for so many years, and to prevail against them, it argues a power and efficacy too mighty for every thing but the Spirit of the Almighty to withstand. Who can look to have a greater stock of inherent grace than those men had; to have more experience of God, and the excellency of his ways, the sweetness of his love, and of communion with him, than they had? who hath either better furniture to oppose sin withal, or more obligation so to do, than they? and yet we see how fearfully they were prevailed against.

As if God had permitted their falls on set purpose, that we might learn to be wary of this powerful enemy, they all of them fell out when they had newly received great and stupendous mercies from the hand of God, that ought to have been strong obligations unto diligence and watchfulness in close obedience. Noah was but newly come forth of that world of waters wherein he saw the ungodly world perishing for their sins, and himself preserved by that astonishing miracle which all ages must admire. Whilst the world's desolation was an hourly remembrancer unto him of his strange preservation by the immediate care and hand of God, he falls unto drunkenness. Lot had newly seen that which every one that thinks on cannot but tremble. He saw, as one speaks, hell coming out of heaven upon unclean sinners, the greatest evidence, except the cross of Christ, that God ever gave in his providence of the judgment to come. He saw himself and children delivered by the special care and miraculous

hand of God; and yet, whilst these strange mercies were fresh upon him, he fell into drunkenness and incest. David was delivered out of all his troubles, and had the necks of his enemies given him round about, and he makes use of his peace from a world of trials and troubles to contrive murder and adultery. Immediately, it was, after Hezekiah's great and miraculous deliverance, that he falls into his carnal pride and boasting. I say, their falls in such seasons seem to be permitted on set purpose, to instruct us all in the truth that we have in hand; so that no persons, in no seasons, with what furniture of grace soever, can promise themselves security from its prevalency, any otherwise than by keeping close constantly to him, who hath supplies to give out that are above its reach and efficacy. Methinks this should make us look about us. Are we better than Noah, who had that testimony from God, that he was a perfect man in his generation, and walked with God? Are we better than Lot, whose righteous soul was vexed with the evil deeds of ungodly men, and is therefore commended by the Holy Ghost? Are we more holy, wise, and watchful than David, who obtained this testimony, that he was *a man after God's own heart*? or better than Hezekiah, who appealed to God himself, that he had served him uprightly, with a perfect heart? And yet what prevalency this law of sin wrought in and over them, we see. And there is no end of the like examples; they are all set up as buoys to discover unto us the sands, the shelves, the rocks, whereupon they made their shipwreck, to their hazard, danger, loss, yea, and would have done to their ruin, had not God been pleased in his faithfulness graciously to prevent it. And this is the first part of this evidence of the power of sin, from its effects. . . .

We have a notable instance of the like in most of the churches that our Saviour awakens to the consideration of their condition, in the Revelation. We may single out one of them: many good things were there in the church of Ephesus, chap. ii. 2, 3. for which it is greatly commended, but yet it is charged with a decay, a declension, a gradual falling off and apostasy: *Thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore whence thou art fallen, and do thy first works*, ver. 4, 5. There was a decay both inward, in the frame of heart, as to

faith and love; and outward, as to obedience and works, in comparison of what they had formerly, by the testimony of Christ himself. The same also might be shewed concerning the rest of those churches, only one or two of them excepted. Five of them are charged with decays and declensions. Hence there is mentioned in the Scripture of the *kindness of youth, of the love of espousals*, with great commendation, Jer. ii. 2, 3. of our *first faith*, 1 Tim. v. 12. of the *beginning of our confidence*, Heb. iii. 14. And cautions are given, that we *lose not the things that we have wrought*, 2 John 8. But what need we look back or search for instances to confirm the truth of this observation? An habitual declension from first engagements unto God, from first attainments of communion with God, from first strictness in duties of obedience, is ordinary and common amongst professors.

DR. J. OWEN.

God's children seldom fall into any heinous sin, without having before experienced some singular visitations and awakenings of grace. He that stands in grace, and takes heed to his heart, must have observed, that the tempter never watches the mind more closely, than after it has experienced some particular favour from God, and an uncommon fervency in prayer, or in meditation on the word. The fall of the disciples was now drawing very nigh; but it was preceded by repeated visits from the Lord Jesus. Before Peter denied his Master three times, he had been visited, awakened, and warned. Man must therefore be convinced that his fall is not to be imputed to God. He previously gives sufficient grace, he uses proper precautions for preserving a soul. Now, if a fall happens notwithstanding his care, we ourselves must bear witness that he was true, and that it is to ourselves, and not to Him, that we are to impute our ruin. Happy is he who makes a right use of the visitations of grace, which usually precede temptations.

RAMBACH.

*The Spirit of Adoption affords consolation in this conflict.*

GAL. iv. 6, *Crying, Abba, Father.*—Paul might have said, 'God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, *calling, Abba, Father.*' He saith not so, but

'*crying, Abba, Father,*' that he might shew and set forth the temptation of a Christian, which yet is but weak and weakly believeth. In the eighth to the Romans, he calleth this crying an unspeakable groaning. Likewise he saith, *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit maketh intercession for us, with unspeakable groanings, &c.*

And this is a singular consolation when he saith, *that the Spirit of Christ is sent into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father:* and again, *that he helpeth our infirmities, making intercession for us with unspeakable groanings.* He that could assuredly believe this, should never be overcome with any affliction, were it never so great. But there are many things that hinder this faith in us. First our heart is born in sin: moreover, this evil is naturally grafted in us, that we doubt of the good will of God towards us, and cannot assure ourselves that we please God, &c. Besides all this, the devil our adversary rangeth about with terrible roarings, and saith, Thou art a sinner, therefore God is angry with thee, and will destroy thee for ever. Against these horrible and intolerable roarings, we have nothing whereupon to hold and stay ourselves, but only the word which setteth Christ before us as a conqueror over sin and death, and over all evils. But to cleave fast to the word in this temptation and these terrors of conscience, herein standeth all the difficulty. For then Christ appeareth to no sense. We see him not; the heart feeleth not his presence or succour in temptation; but rather it seemeth that he is angry with us, and that he forsakes us. Moreover, when a man is tempted and afflicted, he feeleth the fiery darts of the devil, the terrors of death, the anger and judgment of God. All these things cry out horribly against us, so that we see nothing else but desperation and eternal death. But yet in the midst of these terrors of the law, thunderings of sin, assaults of death, and roarings of the devil, the Holy Ghost, saith Paul, crieth in our hearts, *Abba, Father!* And this cry surmounteth the horrible cries of the law, sin, death, the devil, &c.; it pierceth the clouds and the heavens, and ascendeth up into the ears of God.

Paul signifieth therefore by these words, that there is yet infirmity in the godly: as he doth also in the sixth chapter to the

Romans, when he saith, *The Spirit helpeth our infirmities*. Forasmuch therefore as the sense and feeling of the contrary is strong in us; that is to say, forasmuch as we feel more the displeasure of God, than his good will and favour towards us; therefore the Holy Ghost is sent into our hearts, which doth not only sigh and request for us, but mightily crieth, *Abba, Father!* and prayeth for us according to the will of God with tears and unspeakable groanings. And how is this done? When we are in terrors and in the conflict of conscience, we take hold of Christ, and believe that he is our Saviour; but then do the law and sin terrify and torment us most of all. Moreover, the devil assaileth us with all his energies and fiery darts, and goeth about with all his power to take away Christ and all consolations from us. Here we feel ourselves almost gone, and at the point of desperation: for then are we that bruised reed and smoking flax which Isaiah speaketh of, chap. xlii. 3. Notwithstanding, in the mean season, *the Holy Ghost helpeth our infirmities, and maketh intercession for us with unspeakable groanings*, Rom. viii. 26, and certifieth our spirits that *we are the children of God*. Thus is the mind raised out of terrors; it looketh unto his Saviour and high bishop Jesus Christ; it overcometh the infirmity of the flesh; it conceiveth comfort again, and saith, *Abba, Father*. This groaning, which then we scantily feel, Paul calleth a crying and unspeakable groaning, which filleth both heaven and earth. Moreover, he calleth it the crying and groaning of the Spirit, because the Holy Ghost stirreth up the same in our hearts when we are weak, and oppressed with temptation and terror.

Although then the law, sin, and the devil, cry out against us never so much with great and terrible roarings, which seem to fill heaven and earth, and far to exceed this groaning of our heart, yet can they not hurt us. For the more fiercely they assail us, accuse, and torment us with their cryings, so much the more do we groan; and in groaning lay hold upon Christ, call upon him with heart and mouth, cleave unto him, and believe that he was made under the law, that he might deliver us from the curse of the law, and destroy both sin and death. And thus, when we have taken hold of Christ by faith, we cry through him, *Abba, Father*,

Gal. iv. 6. And thus our cry doth surmount the roaring of the law, sin, the devil, &c.

But so far off is it that we think this groaning, which we make in these terrors, and this our weakness, to be a cry, that scarcely we perceive it to be a groaning. For our faith, which in temptation thus groaneth unto Christ, is very weak, if we consider our own sense and feeling, and therefore we hear not this cry. We have but only the word, which when we apprehend in this conflict, we have a little breathing, and then we groan. Of this groaning some little feeling we have, but the cry we hear not. *But he*, saith Paul, *which searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the meaning of the spirit, &c.*, Rom. viii. 27. To this Searcher of the hearts, this small and feeble groaning (as it seemeth unto us) is a loud and a mighty cry, and an unspeakable groaning; in comparison whereof the great and horrible roarings of the law, of sin, of death, and of the devil, and of hell, are nothing; neither can they be once heard. Paul, therefore, not without cause, calleth this groaning of a godly afflicted heart, a cry and a groaning of the spirit which cannot be expressed. For it filleth heaven; so that the angels think they hear nothing else but this cry.

But in us there is a clean contrary feeling. For it seemeth unto us that this our small groaning doth not so pierce the clouds, that there is nothing else heard in heaven of God or his angels. Nay, we think, and especially during the time of temptation, that the devil horribly roareth against us, that the heavens thunder and the earth trembleth, that all will fall upon us, that all creatures threaten our destruction, that hell is open and ready to swallow us up. This feeling is in our heart; these horrible voices, and this fearful show, we hear and we see. And this it is that Paul saith in 2 Cor. xii. 9. that *the strength of Christ is made perfect through weakness*. For then is Christ almighty indeed; then doth he truly reign and triumph in us, when we are so weak that we can scarcely groan. But Paul saith, that this groaning is, in the ears of God, a most mighty cry, which filleth both heaven and earth. . . .

Thou must mark also that Paul saith, that the Spirit maketh intercession for us in our temptation; not with many words or long prayer, but only with a groaning, which notwithstanding cannot be expressed:

and that he crieth not aloud with tears, saying, *Have mercy on me, O God, &c.*, Ps. li. 1, but only uttereth a little sound and a feeble groaning, as, *Ah, Father.* This is but a little word, and yet notwithstanding it comprehendeth all things. The mouth speaketh not, but the affection of the heart speaketh after this manner: Although I be oppressed with anguish and terror on every side, and seem to be forsaken and utterly cast away from thy presence, yet am I thy child, and thou art my

Father for Christ's sake. I am beloved, because of the Beloved. Wherefore, this little word Father, conceived effectually in the heart, passeth all the eloquence of Demosthenes, Cicero, and of the most eloquent rhetoricians that ever were in the world. This matter is not expressed with words, but with groanings, which groanings cannot be uttered with any words or eloquence, for no tongue can express them.

LUTHER.

### SECTION V.—ON AFFLICTION.

#### *Some Considerations against Repining and Desponding under the hand of God.*

AFFLICTIONS fall not out by casualty, but by counsel, Job v. 6. Eph. i. 11; by this counsel of God they are ordained as means of much spiritual good to saints, Isa. xxvii. 9. *By this shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, &c.*, Heb. xii. 10. *But he for our profit, &c.*, Rom. viii. 28. *All things work together for good.* They are God's workmen upon our hearts, to pull down the pride and carnal security of them; and being so, their nature is changed; they are turned into blessings and benefits, Ps. cxix. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* And sure, then, thou hast no reason to quarrel with, but rather to admire that God should concern himself so much in thy good, to use any means for the accomplishing of it. Phil. iii. 11. Paul could bless God, *if by any means he might attain the resurrection of the dead.* *My brethren*, (saith James,) *count it all joy when you fall into divers temptations*, James i. 2, 3. My father is about a design of love upon my soul, and do I well to be angry with him? All that he doth is in pursuance of, and in reference to, some eternal, glorious ends upon my soul. O it is my ignorance of God's design, that makes me quarrel with him! he saith to thee in this case, as to Peter, *What I do thou knowest not now, but hereafter thou shalt know it.* . . .

It is of marvellous efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under afflictions, *to call to mind, that thine own Father hath the ordering of them:* not a creature moves

hand or tongue against thee, but by his permission. Suppose the cup be a bitter cup, yet it is the cup which thy Father hath given thee to drink; and canst thou suspect poison to be in that cup which he delivers thee? Foolish man, put home the case to thine own heart, consult with thine own bowels; canst thou find in thy heart to give thy child that which would hurt, or undo him? No, thou wouldst as soon hurt thyself as him; *If thou then being evil knowest how to give good gifts to thy children*, how much more doth God? Matt. vii. 11. . . .

*God respects you as much in a low, as in a high condition; and therefore it need not so much trouble you to be made low;* nay, to speak home, he manifests more of his love, grace, and tenderness, in the time of affliction, than prosperity. As God did not at first choose you because you were high, so he will not forsake you because you are low: Men may look shy upon you, and alter their respects, as your condition is altered. When Providence hath blasted your estates, your summer friends may grow strange, as fearing you may be troublesome to them; but will God do so? No, no! *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*, Heb. xiii. 5. Indeed if adversity and poverty could bar you from access to God, it were a sad condition; but you may go to God as freely as ever. *My God*, saith the church, *will hear me*, Mic. vii. 7. Poor David, when stripped of all earthly comforts, could yet encourage himself in the Lord his God; and why cannot you? Suppose your husband or child had lost all at sea, and should come to you in rags;

could you deny the relation, or refuse to entertain him? If you would not, much less would God: why then are you so troubled? Though your condition be changed, your Father's love and respects are not changed. . . .

Again, It would much stay the heart under adversity, to consider, That God, by such humbling providences, may be accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited. And should you be troubled at that? Say, Christian, hast thou not many prayers depending before God upon such accounts as these; that he would keep thee from sin, discover to thee the emptiness and insufficiency of the creature; that he would kill and mortify thy lusts, that thy heart may never find rest in any enjoyment but Christ? Why now, by such humbling and impoverishing strokes, God may be fulfilling thy desire. Wouldst thou be kept from sin? Lo, *he hath hedged up thy way with thorns*. Wouldst thou see the creature's vanity? Thy affliction is a fair glass to discover it; for the vanity of the creature is never so effectually and sensibly discovered, as in our own experience of it. Wouldst thou have thy corruptions mortified? This is the way; now God takes away the food and fuel that maintained them; for as prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a mean to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart to rest no where but in the bosom of God? What better way canst thou imagine Providence should take to accomplish thy desire, than by pulling from under thy head, that soft pillow of creature delights on which thou restedst before? And yet you fret at this, peevish child! How dost thou exercise thy Father's patience? If he delay to answer thy prayers, thou art ready to say he regards thee not; if he do that which really answers the scope and main end of them, but not in the way thou expectedst, thou quarrellest with him for that; as if instead of answering, he were crossing all thy hopes and aims; is this ingenuous? Is it not enough that God is so gracious to do what thou desirest, but thou must be so impudent to expect he should do it in the way which thou prescribest?

Again, It may stay thy heart, if thou consider, That in these troubles, God is about that work, which if thou didst see the design of, thy soul would rejoice. We, poor creatures, are bemisted with much ignorance, and are not able to discern

how particular providences work towards God's end; and therefore, like Israel in the wilderness, are often murmuring, because Providence leads us about in a howling desert, where we are exposed to straits; though yet, then he led them, and is now leading us, *by the right way, to a city of habitations*. If you could but see how God, in his secret counsel, hath exactly laid the whole plot and design of thy salvation, even to the smallest means and circumstances; this way, and by these means such a one shall be saved, and by no other; such a number of afflictions I appoint for this man, at this time, and in this order: they shall befall him thus, and thus they shall work for him. Could you, I say, but discern the admirable harmony of divine dispensations, their mutual relations to each other, together with the general respect and influence they all have unto the last end; of all the conditions in the world, you would choose that you are now in, had you liberty to make your own choice. . . . *God works all things according to the counsel of his own will*, so that the counsel of God hath ordained this as the best way to bring about thy salvation: Such a one hath a proud heart, so many humbling providences I appoint for him: such a one an earthly heart, so many impoverishing providences for him. Did you but see this! I need say no more to support the most dejected heart. . . .

O let us take heed that we overlook not the many precious mercies which the people of God enjoy amidst all their troubles.

It is a pity that our tears, upon the account of our troubles, should so blear and blind our eyes, that we should not see our mercies and grounds of comfort. I will not insist upon the mercy of having your lives given you for a prey, nor yet upon the many outward comforts, temporal conveniences, and accommodations which you enjoy, even above what Christ and his precious servants, of whom the world was not worthy, ever had.

But what say you to pardon of sin, interest in Christ, the covenant of promise, and an eternity of happiness, in the presence of God after a few days are over? O that ever a people entitled to such mercies as these, should droop under any temporal affliction, or be so much concerned for the frowns of men, and loss of trifles! You have not the smiles of great men, but you have the favour of the great God; you are, it may be, cast back in your estates,

but thereby furthered in spirituals. You cannot live so bravely, plentifully, and easily, as before; but still you may live as holy and heavenly as ever: will you then grieve so much for these circumstances, as to forget your substantials? Shall light troubles make you forget weighty mercies? Remember the church's true riches are laid out of the reach of all its enemies: they may make you poor, but not miserable. What though God do not distinguish, in his outward dispensations, betwixt his own and others? Yea, what though his judgments single out the best, and spare the worst? What though an Abel be killed in love, and a Cain survive in hatred; a bloody Dionysius die in his bed, and a good Josiah fall in battle? What though the belly of the wicked be filled with hidden treasures, and the teeth of the saints broken with gravel stones, yet still here is much matter of praise; for electing love has distinguished, though common providence did not; and whilst prosperity and impunity slay the wicked, even slaying and adversity shall benefit and save the righteous. . . .

Look upon all the creatures as in the hand of God, who manages them in all their motions, limiting, restraining, and determining them all at his pleasure.

Get this truth well settled by faith in your hearts; it will marvellously guard them against slavish fears. The first chapter of Ezekiel contains an admirable scheme, or draught of Providence; there you may see the living creatures who move the wheels, viz. the great affairs and turnings of things here below, coming unto Christ, who sits upon the throne, to receive new orders and instructions from him, ver. 24—26. And in Rev. vi. you read of white, black, and red horses, which are nothing else but the instruments which God employs in executing his judgments in the world, as wars, pestilence, and death: but when these horses are prancing, and trampling up and down the world, here is that may quiet our hearts, that God hath the reins in his hand. Wicked men are sometimes like mad horses, they would stamp the people of God under their feet, but that the bridle of Providence is in their lips, Job i. 11, 12. A lion at liberty is terrible to meet, but who is afraid of the lion in the keeper's hand? . . .

Quiet your trembling hearts, by recording and consulting your past experiences

of the care and faithfulness of God in former distresses.

These experiences are food for your faith in a wilderness condition, Psal. lxxiv. 14. By this David kept his heart in time of danger, 1 Sam. xvii. 37, and Paul his, 2 Cor. i. 10. It was sweetly answered by Silentarius, when one told him that his enemies way-laid him to take away his life, 'Si Deus mei curam non habet, quid vivo?' If God take no care of me, how have I escaped hitherto? You may plead with God old experiences to procure new ones; for it is in pleading with God for new deliverances, as it is in pleading for new pardons. Now mark how Moses pleads on that account with God, *Pardon, I beseech thee, the iniquity of this people, as thou hast forgiven them from Egypt until now*, Numb. xiv. 19. He doth not say as men do, Lord, this is the first fault, thou hast not been troubled before to sign their pardon: but, Lord, because thou hast pardoned them so often, I beseech thee pardon them once again. So in new straits, Lord, thou hast often heard, helped, and saved in former fears; therefore now help again, for with thee there is plenteous redemption, and thine arm is not shortened. . . .

Exercise holy trust in times of great distress.

Make it your business to trust God with your lives and comforts, and then your hearts will be at rest about them. So did David, Psal. lvi. 3, *At what time I am afraid, I will trust in thee*; q. d. Lord, if at any time a storm rise, I will make bold to shelter me from it under the covert of thy wings. Go to God by acts of faith and trust, and never doubt but he will secure you. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee*, Isa. xxvi. 3. God takes it well when thou comest to him thus; Father, my life, my liberty, or estate, are hunted after, and I cannot secure them; O let me leave them in thy hand: the poor leaveth himself with thee: and doth his God fail him; No, *thou art the helper of the fatherless*, Psal. x. 14; that is, thou art the helper of the destitute one, that hath none to go to but God. And that is a sweet Scripture, *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord*, Psal. cxii. 7; he doth not say, his ear shall be privileged from the report of evil tidings, he may

hear as sad tidings as other men, but his heart shall be privileged from the terror of those tidings, *his heart is fixed*.

FLAVEL.

It is good for a man not always to keep his eyes at home; but sometimes to look abroad at his neighbours, and to compare his own condition with the worse estate of others. I know I deserve no more than the meanest, no better than the worst of men; yet how many do I see and hear to lie groaning upon their sick beds, in great extremity of torment; whereas I walk up and down in a competency of health! How many do I see ready to famish, and forced to either beg or starve; whereas I eat my own bread! How many lie rotting in jails and dungeons, or are driven to wander in unknown deserts, or amongst people whose knowledge they understand not; whereas I enjoy home and liberty! How many are shrieking under scourges and racks; whereas I sit at ease! And if I shall cast mine eyes upon my spiritual condition, alas, how many do I see sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death; whereas the *Sun of Righteousness hath risen to me with healing in his wings!* How many lie in a woful bondage under sin and Satan; whereas my Saviour hath freed me from those hellish chains, and brought me into the *glorious liberty of the sons of God!* How many are miserably misled into the dangerous by-paths of error; whereas he hath graciously kept me in the plain and sure way of his saving truth! If we do not sometimes make these not proud, but thankful comparisons; and look upon ourselves, not with direct beams, but by reflection upon others; we shall never be sensible enough of our own mercies.

BR. HALL.

*Saints must look for Trials on earth.*

It is the will of God, that his people should be a comforted people. The most evangelical part of the prophecy of Isaiah begins with this, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God*. He takes pleasure in their prosperity, he delights to see them cheerful, and to hear them sing at their work, and sing in his ways. Religion was never designed to make people melancholy. Wisdom's adversaries do her wrong, if they paint her in mourning, and wisdom's children do not do her right, if they give the occasion to do so; for though they are, like St. Paul, as sorrowful, yet they should be, like him, *always*

*rejoicing*, because though they seem, perhaps, to have nothing, yet really they possess all things. So good a Master do we serve, that he has been pleased to twist interests with us, and so to compound his glory and our comfort, that in seeking the one, we seek the other also. He has made that to be our duty, which is indeed our greatest privilege, and that is to delight ourselves alway in the Lord, and to live a life of complacency in him. And it is the New Testament character of a Christian indeed, that *he rejoiceth in Christ Jesus*. . .

Those who have so much reason to rejoice, are often cast down, and in sorrow, and not altogether without cause. This state of probation and preparation is a mixed state, and it is proper enough it should be so, for the trial and exercise of various graces. In those whose hearts are visited by the day-spring from on high, the light is neither clear nor dark, it is neither day nor night. They have their comforts, which they would not exchange for the treasures of kings and princes; but withal they have their crosses, under which they groan, being burdened. They have their hopes, which are as an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil; but withal they have their fears, for their warfare is not yet accomplished, they have not yet attained, neither are already perfect. They have their joys, such as the world can neither give nor take away, joys that a stranger does not intermeddle with; but withal they have their griefs; their way to Canaan lies through a wilderness, and their way to Jerusalem through the valley of Bacah. Their master was himself *a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*, and they are to be his followers. We must not, therefore, think that either the present happiness of the saints, which in this world they are to expect, or their present holiness, which in this world they are to endeavour after, consists in such delights and joys, as leave no room for any mourning and sense of trouble; no, there is a sorrow that is a godly sorrow; a jealousy of ourselves, that is a godly jealousy: it is only a perfect love that casts out all fear and all grief, and this we are not to expect in this imperfect state. All tears shall not be wiped away from our eyes, nor shall sorrows and sighing quite flee away, till we come to Heaven. While we are here, we are in a vale of tears, and must conform to the temper of the climate; we are at

sea, and must expect to be tossed with tempests; we are in the camp, and must expect to be alarmed.

Our Lord Jesus has therefore provided such comfort for the relief of his people, in their present sorrowful state, as may serve to balance their griefs, and keep them from being pressed above measure; and he has instituted means for the application of those comforts to them, that they may never fear, may never be sorry, as those that have no hope or joy. The covenant of grace, as it is ministered in the everlasting Gospel, has in it a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady; so that they who have an interest in that covenant, and know it, may triumph with blessed Paul, *We are troubled on every side, yet we are not distressed; perplexed sometimes, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken of God; cast down, but not destroyed.* This is that which bears them up under all their burdens, comforts them in all their griefs, and enables them to rejoice in tribulation.

The word of God is written for this end, that their *joy may be full*, 1 John i. 4. and that *through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, they may have hope.* Precious promises are there treasured up, to be the foundations of their faith and hope, and consequently the fountains of their joy. Songs of thanksgiving are there drawn up for them, to refresh themselves with in their weary pilgrimage, and to have recourse to, for the silencing of their complaints. Ministers are appointed to be *the helpers of their joy*, and to speak comfort to such as mourn in Zion. The Sabbath is the day which the Lord has made for this very end, that they may *rejoice and be glad in it.* Prayer is appointed for the ease of troubled spirits, that in it they may pour out their complaints before God, and fetch in comfort from him; *Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

MATT. HENRY.

You love perhaps to hear of such consolations as these, but you do not feel any urgent need of them; and after dwelling on them for an hour, you are tempted to let them pass away from your memories, as though they concerned you not. But you will need them. Your sunshine will not go with you all the way to the grave. As surely as you are the children of Christ, so surely will he make you ac-

quainted with *the days of darkness.* You know not how many of them may be your portion, nor how soon they may come. You know not what clouds may even now be gathering around your path; what fears, and discouragements, and temptations, and conflicts, may be near at hand. Expect trials. Prepare for them. Take unto you *the whole armour of God.* *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.* Treasure up in your memory its precious promises. When trouble comes, let it find you ready, waiting to receive, and strengthened to endure it.

And what does this text say to you who are beginning to be afflicted and tossed, in your way to heaven? It bids you put to yourselves the question of the troubled Job, *What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* Shall we take the comforts he has prepared for his children, and murmur at his corrections? He measures out to us good and evil, light and darkness, with infinite wisdom and love; and we must learn to receive both with equal thankfulness. There may be changes and counterchanges in our lot; and what if there be? Through the power of the Holy Ghost, they are subduing our corruptions, exercising our graces, bringing us to a more simple dependence on our God. And he who sends them, marks them all, controuls them all, turns them all to one blessed end.

Rest satisfied, brethren, with this truth, that, however mysterious and perplexing many things within you and around you may seem, they are all parts of one and the same plan; that this plan is continually before the Lord; that it has been so from your cradle, and will be so to your grave; that he studied and arranged it in eternity, and in eternity will glorify himself for the grace which it displays. Your own lips shall praise him there—praise him, not merely for the love that formed you for himself, the Saviour who redeemed, the Spirit who sanctifies, and the heavenly consolations which refresh you, but praise him for the troubles which have brought you low, the conflicts which have made you tremble, the sorrows that have almost broken your heart, and the weakness that has subdued it. And the time is drawing nigh. The night is already *far spent, the day is at hand*, a cloudless, never ending day. Let us look forward to it. Let us look at *the things which are not seen.* Let



us think of them till, among all the changes and chances of this mortal life, we can say with the happy Paul, *I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; every where and in all things, I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

REV. C. BRADLEY.

### *The Reasonableness of present Afflictions.*

To shew the reasonableness of present afflictions, consider,—they are the way to rest;—they keep us from mistaking our rest,—and from losing our way to it; they quicken our pace towards it; they chiefly incommode our flesh; and under them God's people have often the sweetest foretastes of their rest.

1. Consider, that labour and trouble are the common way to rest, both in the course of nature and grace. Can there possibly be rest without weariness? Do you not travail and toil first, and rest after? The day for labour is first, and then follows the night for rest. Why should we desire the course of grace to be perverted, any more than the course of nature? It is an established decree, that *we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*, Acts xiv. 22. And that *if we suffer, we shall also reign with Christ*, 2 Tim. ii. 12. And what are we, that God's statutes should be reversed for our pleasure?

2. Afflictions are exceeding useful to us, to keep us from mistaking our rest. A Christian's motion towards heaven is voluntary, and not constrained. Those means therefore are most profitable, which help his understanding and will. The most dangerous mistake of our souls is, to take the creature for God, and earth for heaven. What warm, affectionate, eager thoughts have we of the world, till afflictions cool and moderate them! Afflictions speak convincingly, and will be heard when preachers cannot. Many a poor Christian is sometimes bending his thoughts to wealth, or flesh-pleasing, or applause; and so loses his relish of Christ, and the joy above; till God break in upon his riches, or children, or conscience, or health, and break down his mountain which he thought so strong. And then when he lieth in Ma-

nasseh's fetters, or is fastened to his bed with pining sickness, the world is nothing, and heaven is something. If our dear Lord did not put these thorns under our head, we should sleep out our lives and lose our glory.

3. Afflictions are also God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our rest. Without this hedge of thorns, on the right hand and left, we should hardly keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it, and turn out at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how doth sickness, or other affliction reduce us! Every Christian, as well as Luther, may call affliction one of his best schoolmasters; and with David may say, *Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now have I kept thy word*, Psal. cxix. 67. Many thousand recovered sinners may cry, 'O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted!' Not only the *green pastures*, and *still waters*, but *the rod and staff they comfort us*. Though the word and Spirit do the main work, yet suffering so unbolts the door of our heart, that the word hath easier entrance.

4. Afflictions likewise serve to quicken our pace in the way to our rest. It were well if mere love would prevail with us, and that we were rather drawn to heaven, than driven. But seeing our hearts are so bad, that mercy will not do it; it is better to be put on with the sharpest scourge, than loiter, like *the foolish virgins*, till *the door is shut*. O what difference is there betwixt our prayers in health and in sickness; betwixt our repentings in prosperity and adversity! Alas! if we did not sometime feel the spur, what a slow pace would most of us hold toward heaven? Since our vile natures require it, why should we be unwilling that God should do us good by sharp means? Judge, Christian, whether thou dost not go more watchfully and speedily in the way to heaven, in thy sufferings, than in thy more pleasing and prosperous state.

5. Consider further, it is but the flesh that is chiefly troubled and grieved by afflictions. In most of our sufferings the soul is free, unless we ourselves wilfully afflict it. 'Why then, O my soul, dost thou side with this flesh, and complain, as it complaineth? It should be thy work to

*keep it under, and bring it into subjection*; and if God do it for thee, shouldst thou be discontented? Hath not the pleasing of it been the cause of almost all thy spiritual sorrows? Why then may not the displeasing of it further thy joys? Must not *Paul and Silas sing*, because *their feet are in the stocks*? Their spirits were not imprisoned. Ah, unworthy soul! is this thy thanks to God for preferring thee so far before thy body? When it is rotting in the grave, thou shalt be a companion of the perfected spirits of the just. In the mean time, hast thou not consolation which the flesh knows not of? Murmur not then at God's dealings with thy body; if it were for want of love to thee, he would not have dealt so by all his saints. Never expect thy flesh should truly expound the meaning of the rod. It will call love, hatred; and say, God is destroying, when he is saving. It is the suffering party, and therefore not fit to be the judge.' Could we once believe God, and judge of his dealings by his word, and by their usefulness to our souls, and reference to our rest, and could we stop our ears against all the clamours of the flesh, then we should have a truer judgment of our afflictions.

6. Once more consider, God seldom gives his people so sweet a foretaste of their future rest, as in their deep afflictions. He keeps his most precious cordials for the time of our greatest faintings and dangers. He gives them, when he knows they are needed, and will be valued; and when he is sure to be thanked for them, and his people rejoiced by them. Especially when our sufferings are more directly for his cause, then he seldom fails to sweeten the bitter cup. The martyrs have possessed the highest joys. When did Christ preach such comforts to his disciples, as when *their hearts were sorrowful* at his departure? When did he appear among them, and say, *Peace be unto you*, but when they were shut up for fear of the Jews? When did Stephen see *heaven opened*, but when he was giving up his life for the testimony of Jesus? Is not that our best state, wherein we have most of God? Why else do we desire to come to heaven? If we look for a heaven of fleshly delights, we shall find ourselves mistaken. Conclude then, that affliction is not so bad a state for a saint in his way to rest. Are we wiser than God? Doth he not know what is good for us as well as

we? Or is he not as careful of our good, as we of our own? Woe to us, if he were not much more so! and if he did not love us better than we love either him or ourselves.

Say not, 'I could bear any other affliction but this.' If God had afflicted thee where thou canst bear it, thy idol would neither have been discovered nor removed. Neither say, 'If God would deliver me out of it, I could be content to bear it.' Is it nothing that he hath promised it *shall work for thy good*? Is it not enough that thou art sure to be delivered at death? Nor let it be said, 'If my affliction did not disable me for duty, I could bear it.' It doth not disable thee for that duty which tendeth to thy own personal benefit, but is the greatest quickening help thou canst expect. As for the duty to others, it is not thy duty when God disables thee. . . . Do not plead, 'If I had but that consolation, which you say God reserveth for suffering times, I should suffer more contentedly; but I do not perceive any such thing.' The more you suffer for righteousness' sake, the more of this blessing you may expect; and the more you suffer for your own evil doing, the longer it will be before that sweetness comes. Are not the comforts you desire, neglected or resisted? Have your afflictions wrought kindly with you, and fitted you for comfort? It is not mere suffering that prepares you for comfort, but the success and fruit of sufferings upon your hearts.

BAXTER.

Who can say that any part of God's dispensations was not needful in the order of means to his reaching Heaven? We are so full of folly and perverseness and worldliness, so subject to declension in religion, so apt to be languid and cold and formal, so ready to relapse into temptation, so prone to choose a flowery path rather than a safe one, so little able to judge of our dangers and our enemies, that we should inevitably depart from our God, if his gracious care did not order and direct the affairs of life so as to promote, not our feelings, but our graces, not our fond schemes and projects, but our attention to our heavenly vocation, not the interests of time, but of eternity, not our ease, but our salvation. And surely if we resign ourselves, nay, submit with gratitude, to salutary, medical discipline, however painful or severe, much more should we lie patiently in the hands of

that heavenly Physician who understands intimately all our spiritual maladies, who perceives the tendency of our circumstances, who knows the stations to which he means to call us, and sees the indispensable necessity of preventing or checking the pride and vanity and self-confidence to which we are so greatly prone. Oh! infinite mystery of Divine mercy, wisdom, and grace! O the unsearchable depths of the counsels of redemption! And is it then in this way, O our God and Saviour, that unknown to us thou art furthering our final salvation? How unfathomable is thy love, that after the sacrifice of thy own life on the cross, thou hast condescendingly brought us to thyself by the secret energy of thy Spirit, and still guardest us in the ways of righteousness by thy providential controul! And is it thus that thou leadest us, as thou didst Israel of old, in order to humble us and to prove us, to know what is in our hearts, to do us good at our latter end? Is it thus that thou bringest us by a right way to a city of habitation? O continue thy goodness and mercy to us; O leave us not to our own wisdom; but administer to us such discipline as thou seest needful for us; O preserve us in thy faith, fear, and love, and 'grant that we may so pass through things temporal, that we finally lose not the things eternal.'

REV. D. WILSON.

#### *The Uses and Ends of Affliction.*

THERE are many gracious ends, respecting believers themselves, wherefore God doth afflict them: as, to exercise their graces, to keep them humble and dependent, to starve up their lusts, to wean them from the world, and to fit them for a better. But the great end, respecting God himself, is, that, by these afflictions, they might know and see how holy a God they have to deal with; who doth so perfectly hate sin, that he will follow it with chastisements wheresoever it be found. Though the sin be pardoned, though the sinner be beloved; yet God will afflict him: not, indeed, to satisfy his justice, for that is done for him by Jesus Christ; but to satisfy his holiness, and vindicate the honour of his purity in the world, and himself too from contempt, when those, who will presume, to offend, shall certainly smart for it: 2 Sam. xii. 13, 14.

The afflictions and evils, that believers

suffer, are not inflicted by God, that thereby he might satisfy his justice upon them; and, therefore, they are not from the curse of the law, nor properly punishments for their sins.

Punishment always connotes satisfaction for transgressing the law. But this satisfaction to Divine justice is not to be wrought out by believers themselves; and, therefore, whatsoever they suffer is not strictly punishment. Christ hath fully satisfied all the demands of justice; and, therefore, no further satisfaction is expected from them, since that could not be consistent with the rules and measures of justice to punish both the surety and principal too. The curse of the law poured all its poison into Christ; and there is not one drop of it that falls besides upon believers: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us*, Gal. iii. 13. For that death, and all those evils threatened in the covenant of works, are curses; not merely because they are grievous and afflicting; but because inflicted on transgressors in order to the satisfaction of Divine justice upon them. And therefore Christ is said to be accursed, and his death to have been an accursed death, (*Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree*,) not because he died, nor because he died a most bitter, painful, and shameful death; but because he was ordained to undergo this death, as a satisfaction to the justice of God for the sins of men. And, truly, should God inflict those very evils which he now doth upon believers, to the end that he might thereby raise some satisfaction to his justice, though the evils themselves would not be greater, nor more sharp and painful, yet they would all be curses, and make them too accursed creatures: for the true notion of a curse and of a punishment, consists not in the quality or the measure of the evil suffered; but in the inflicting of it as penal, and in order to the satisfaction of justice.

Hence, therefore, with what calmness and sweet peace may a true Christian look upon all his afflictions! Though they be sore and heavy, and seem to carry much wrath in them, yet they have nothing of the curse. The sting was received, all of it, into the body of Christ: so that now the covenant of works is disarmed to him; and he need not fear the dreadful thunder of its threatenings, for the bolt is already discharged upon another. Indeed, were

it God's intent to satisfy his justice by the evils which he brings upon me, I might then tremble with horror and astonishment; and account every the slightest suffering a presage and pledge of far greater and eternal to come: but if I have an interest in the righteousness of Christ, justice is already satisfied, and the curse removed; and all the sorrows and afflictions which I suffer, are but the corrections of a gracious Father, not the revenge of an angry God. Am I pinched by poverty? that is no curse: God doth not seek revenge upon me; but only keeps me from the allurements to sin and vanity. Am I afflicted with losses in my relations or estate? that is no curse: God doth not thereby seek satisfaction to his justice; but only takes these from me, that he might be all in all. Am I tormented with pain, and weakened with diseases; and will these bring death upon me? yet diseases and death itself are no curses; but only a necessary passage from life to life, a bad step to Canaan, a short night between one day and another. Revenging justice is satisfied: and, therefore, come what afflictions it shall please God to try me with, they are all weak and weaponless; without sting, without curse in them.

But, most sad and miserable is the condition of wicked men, whose infidelity excludes them from having a right in the sufferings of Christ. For there is not the least affliction that befalls them, the least gripe of any pain, the least loss in their estates, the most slight and inconsiderable cross that is, but it comes upon them through the curse of the law. God is, by these, beginning to satisfy his justice upon them; and sends these to arrest and seize them. Every affliction is to them but part of payment of that vast and endless sum of plagues, which God will, most severely and to the very utmost farthing, exact of them in hell.

BP. HOPKINS.

Those graces that would possibly grow heavy and unwieldy, by too much ease, are held in breath, and increase their activity and strength, by conflict. Divine grace, even in the heart of weak and sinful man, is an invincible thing. Drown it in the waters of adversity, it rises more beautiful, as not being drowned indeed, but only washed; throw it into the furnace of fiery trials, it comes out purer, and

loses nothing but the dross which our corrupt nature mixes with it. Thus the Apostle here expounds the *if need be*, 1 Pet. i. 6. and so justifies the joy in afflictions, which there he speaks of, by their utility and the advantage faith derives from them: it is so tried that it shall appear in its full brightness, at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

LEIGHTON.

We find in the history of the patriarchs, that every new difficulty and trial with which they met, furnished a fresh opportunity for God to manifest himself, to renew his covenant and confirm his promises. And God never appeared but when urgent necessity called for his presence, either to support them under pressures and trials, or to call them to new duties, for the manifestation, in its effects, of their grace, and of his glory. As their difficulties abounded, their supports and comforts were multiplied. O blessed exchange! Outward ease and tranquillity, for spiritual joy and growth in the divine life. Who that has any hatred of sin or any love to God in his heart, would not wish to carry on a daily exchange so comfortable and so advantageous to the soul? No outward trouble, I am sure, ever did, or ever can give me so much uneasiness and sorrow, as the incessant workings of my corruptions continually do. I hope, therefore, to be evermore thankful for every cross, disappointment, sickness, trouble, &c. which hath the smallest tendency to weaken my corruptions, to make me more dead to the world and to myself, and more alive to God and the things of God. There is within me so much pride to be subdued, so much worldly-mindedness to be destroyed, so much unbelief to be rooted out, and so much self to be denied, that my heart should overflow with gratitude, when I feel God's hand upon me, however heavy it may be, carrying on the work of holiness in subduing or weakening any of these sinful tempers and dispositions, and accomplishing that glorious work to which my feeble strength is unequal. I hope to look more to the end, than to the means; to look beyond the rod and the chastisement, to 'the peaceable fruits of righteousness which it yieldeth to them who are exercised with it.' As nothing but holiness will be of any value or any real service to me in the end, may I be thankful for every thing,

however unpleasant and grievous now, which may tend to promote it in my soul. So the end is but obtained, I am perfectly satisfied with the means which infinite wisdom, influenced by infinite goodness, may think proper to appoint.

God has not, like earthly parents, any foolish tenderness or fondness which may prevent him from using the rod, when necessary for the benefit and real interest of his children. He delivered Job into Satan's hand from love to him; foreseeing how he would bring him out of the furnace like gold purified in the fire. As God, therefore, never on any occasion prefers the ease of his children to their holiness, I hope in every thing to be of the same mind, always receiving every thing with thankfulness from his gracious hand, who has assured me that every thing shall work together for good. O precious promise! It is like the tree which Moses cast into the waters of Marah. It makes the bitterest water of affliction sweet and wholesome. Like the philosopher's stone, it turns every thing into gold. When I find, actually and experimentally, all working for my good, I feel gratitude in some degree influencing my heart; but when I do not find present good issuing from present evil, I often find it very difficult to believe the promises, and to rest satisfied that it will certainly be so in the end, however unlikely the event may at present appear. Our unbelief, however, makes not the faith of God without effect. He remains faithful, and will abundantly accomplish all his promises. It comforts me, therefore, to think that it will be so, though my faith in that truth is often very weak and feeble. His promises depend not on my faith, but on his own faithfulness, which is eternal and unchangeable like himself. . . .

Though we are not at home, yet if every thing works effectually to bring us daily nearer, in the temper of our minds and in the frame of our hearts, what cause for thankfulness! Blessed is that cross which humbles our pride,—and that disappointment which makes us more resigned to God's will,—and that sickness which crucifies us more to the world and the world to us,—and that poverty which makes us richer in grace,—and that contempt of the world which makes us cleave more to God and value more highly his favour and approbation; yea, blessed is

that event which takes away *all* the props which we in any degree depend on for the smallest portion of our happiness, and thus brings us to depend and live wholly on God. Till then we shall never be happy, or glorify God our Redeemer in any suitable manner. When we make him alone our strength and portion, we are never disappointed, but ever abundantly satisfied as with marrow and fatness. I long to be swallowed up entirely in him, and be possessed entirely by him. The hope of such a desirable event fills me with transports of joy. REV. T. CHARLES.

Let, then, the believer be induced to look upon his present afflictions, of whatever kind, in a very different light from what unbelief would represent them. The Gospel opens a most encouraging view to the mind. Ye oppressed, ye afflicted, ye tried and tempted, tossed with tempests and not comforted, consider it well. Those things which so alarm your fears are the means the Lord is using to promote your best, because your spiritual and eternal, interest; that which you would prefer before all things, if you were but as wise as he. They flow from the abundance of his love, the unchangeableness of his purposes of grace; from that mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting, and which secures that all the ways of the Lord should be *mercy and truth to such as keep his covenant and his testimonies*. He is hewing the living stones of his church for the spiritual building, the temple on Mount Sion, that they may be prepared for the place designed for them there, before they are brought there, that there may be no more hewing there. He is cleansing his people from the pollution that is in the world, that he may fit them for the world of light and purity, and make them meet to be *partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*. He is melting down the metal that he may purify it, that, divested of its dross, he may again cast it into his own mould, to restore that image which was defaced, or rather destroyed, that it may bear his Divine impression with perfect purity and glory, throughout eternity. Not a grain shall be lost, though it pass through the fiery trial: it shall be his eternal treasure. . . . He sits by, observing the whole: he has well observed the need they stand in of the trying dispensation; what peculiar trials are suited to their state;

and what degrees they may be able to endure. He sees how they bear under it, the effects which it produces. He is intent upon and examining the process: it shall neither be too little nor too much; but, in time, in nature, and in measure, suited to answer the purpose of the great Redeemer in the purification and preservation of his people. . . . If in heaviness through manifold temptations, it is, *that the trial of faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire, may be found to praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ,* 1 Pet. i. 7.

The great object, therefore, which ought to engage our attention in all, is, that which we are always too apt to neglect, *the design of God.* The due consideration of this, would tend to produce a spirit of humiliation under it, of resignation to his will, of faith and dependence, of holy confidence in future trial, while the trial of faith wrought patience, experience, and hope, Rom. v. 3, &c., and of holy conformity to the image and will of God. These are tempers in which we should meet afflictions with profit, to the glory of God and our own edification and consolation. Thus they would all be found working together for good, and promote that grand end, which he will certainly accomplish towards all his people, in the world to come.

REV. W. GOODE.

#### *Afflictions try the pureness of a Christian's Faith.*

THE furnace of afflictions shews upright real faith, to be such indeed, remaining still the same even in the fire, the same that it was, undiminished, as good gold loses none of its quantity in the fire. Doubtless many are deceived, in time of ease and prosperity, with imaginary faith and fortitude: so that there may be still some doubt, while a man is underset with outward helps, as riches, friends, esteem, &c., whether he leans upon those, or upon God, who is an invisible support, though stronger than all that are visible, and is the peculiar and alone stay of faith in all conditions. But when all these outward props are plucked away from a man, then it will be manifest, whether something else upholds him or not; for if there be nothing else, then he falls: but if his mind stands firm and unremoved as before, then it is evident he laid not his weight upon

these things which he had then about him, but was built upon a foundation though not seen, which is able alone to stay him, although he be not only frustrated of all other supports, but beaten upon with storms and tempests; as our Saviour says, *the house fell not, because it was founded upon a rock,* Matt. vii. 25.

This testified the truth of David's faith, who found it stay his mind upon God, when there was nothing else near that could do it: *I had fainted, unless I had believed,* Psa. xxvii. 13. So in his strait, 1 Sam. xxx. 6, where it is said, that *David was greatly distressed; but he encouraged himself in the Lord his God.* Thus, Psa. lxxiii. 26, *My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever.* The heart's natural strength of spirit and resolution may bear up under outward weakness, or the failing of the flesh; but when the heart itself fails, which is the strength of the flesh, what shall strengthen it? nothing but God, *who is the strength of the heart and its portion for ever.* Thus faith worketh alone, when the case suits that of the Prophet's, Hab. iii. 17, *Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine, &c., yet, I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.*

In spiritual trials, which are the sharpest and most fiery of all, when the furnace is within a man, when God doth not only shut up his loving-kindness from his feeling, but seems to shut it up in hot displeasure, when he writes bitter things against him, yet then to depend upon him, and wait for his salvation, and the more he smites, the more to cleave to him,—this is not only a true, but a strong, and very refined faith indeed. Well might he say, *When I am tried I shall come forth as gold,* who could say that word, *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him:* though I saw, as it were, his hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand would I expect salvation.

LEIGHTON.

Therefore, rejoice now in the midst of all your sufferings. Stand upon the advanced ground of the promises and the covenant of grace, and by faith look beyond this moment, and all that is in it, to that day wherein *everlasting joy shall be upon your heads, a crown of it, and sorrow and mourning shall flee away,* Isa. li. 11. Believe in this day, and the victory

is won. Oh! that blessed hope, well fixed and exercised, would give other manner of spirits. What zeal for God would it not inspire! What invincible courage against all encounters! How soon will this pageant of the world vanish, that men are gazing on, these pictures and fancies of pleasures and honours, falsely so called, and give place to the real glory of the sons of God, when this blessed Son, who is God, shall be seen appearing in full majesty, and all his brethren in glory with him, all clothed in their robes! And if you ask, Who are they? Why, *these are they who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb*, Rev. vii. 14.

LEIGHTON.

*The Saints need not fear for the safety of Christ's Church.*

THESE are days of great confusion in the Christian world, and the chief fear of a gracious heart is for the ark, lest that should fall into the enemy's hand, and when this palladium is taken, the city of God (his Church) be trod under the feet of pride. I confess Satan seems to get ground daily. He hath sadly corrupted the truths of Christ, brought a disesteem on ordinances: he hath had advantage by the divisions of the godly, to harden those that are wicked into a further disdain of religion. And now, Christian, the confidence of thine enemies, together with the distracted state of Christ's affairs in the world, may discompose thy spirit, concerning the issue of these providences that are rolling over our heads; but be still, poor heart, and know, that the contest is not between the Church and Satan, but between Christ and him: these are the two champions. Stand now, O ye army of saints, still by faith, to see the all-wise God wrestle with the subtle devil. That faith which ascribes greatness and wisdom to God, will shrink up Satan's subtilty into a thing of nothing. Unbelief fears Satan as a lion; faith treads on him as a worm. Behold! thy God at work, and be sure, that though man's wisdom may be levelled with folly, God is never interrupted. All the plots of hell and commotions of earth cannot foil him. The mystery of his providence may hang a curtain before his work, that we cannot see what he is doing; but then, *when darkness is about him, righteousness is the seat of his*

*throne for ever.* Yea, what though the church were like Jonah in the whale's belly, swallowed up to the eye of reason, by the fury of men, yet dost not thou remember the whale had not power to destroy the prophet? O be not too quick to bury the Church before she be dead. Stay whilst Christ tries his skill before you give it over; bring Christ by your prayers to its grave, to speak a resurrection word. Indeed God counts himself exceedingly disparaged in the thoughts of his people (though at the lowest ebb of his church's affairs) if his naked word, and single bond of his promise, will not be taken as sufficient security to their faith, for its deliverance. GURNALL.

Learn to put a right construction on all God's dealings with his church, and with thy soul. With regard to his church, there may be a time wherein thou shalt see it not only tossed, but, to thy thinking, covered and swallowed up with tears: but wait a little, it shall arrive safe. This is a common stumbling stone, but walk by the light of the word, and the eye of Faith looking on it, and thou shalt pass by and not stumble at it. The church mourns, and Babylon sings—*sits as a queen*; but for how long? She shall *come down and sit in the dust*; and Sion shall be glorious, *and put on her beautiful garments*, while Babylon shall not look for another revolution to raise her again; no, she shall never rise. *And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus, with violence, shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all*, Rev. xviii. 21.

Be not hasty: take God's work together, and do not judge of it by parcels. It is indeed all wisdom and righteousness; but we shall best discern the beauty of it, when we look on it in the frame, when it shall be fully completed and finished, and our eyes enlightened to take a fuller and clearer view of it than we can have here. Oh, what wonder, what endless wondering will it then command!

We read of Joseph hated, and sold, and imprisoned, and all most unjustly, yet, because within a leaf or two, we find him freed and exalted, and his brethren coming as supplicants to him, we are satisfied. But when we look on things which are for the present cloudy and dark, our shortsighted, hasty spirits cannot learn to wait

a little, till we see the other side, and what end the Lord makes. We see *judgment beginning at the house of God*, and this perplexes us while we consider not the rest, *What shall be the end of them that obey not the Gospel?* God begins the judgment on his church for a little time, that it may end and rest upon his enemies for ever. And indeed, he leaves the wicked last in the punishment, that he may make use of them for the punishment of his church. They are *his rod*, Isa. x. 5; but when he hath done that work with them, they are *broken and burnt*, and that, when they are at the height of their insolence and boasting, not knowing what hand moves them, and smites his people with them for a while, *till the day of their consuming come* ver. 16, 24, 25. LEIGHTON.

The church of Christ is the city of the Lord, the place which he has chosen; walled around by his grace, his wisdom, his care, his almighty power, and covenant love. Here is its only, but here is its unfailing, protection from every enemy and danger. O believer! realize thy security, and let faith give glory to the Rock of thy salvation. But let the guilty impenitent, amidst his gaiety and mirth, lay to heart the awful exposure of his state. The world, without Christ, without his grace, is without the walls of salvation. Like a town thrown open and exposed to the ravages of the enemies which surround it, without the least protection or defence. The roaring lion, or the raging bear, yea, every devouring or malicious enemy, may break in, O sinner; ruin thy comfort, and destroy thy soul. Out of Christ, a prey to thy lusts, thy passions, and thy sins, nothing can protect thee from their assaults, or deliver thee from the wrath of an offended God. Thou art exposed to every attack; and canst find no shelter nor retreat when guilty fears invade, when afflictions press hard upon thy dying body; when death, the great enemy, surrounded with his numerous host, the pallid legions of pains, sorrows, agonies, and groans, approaches to break down thy mortal frame. And what wilt thou do then, when the Almighty shall awake to judgment? Fly, then, to this City of Refuge, and place thyself under the care of our Jesus, the only Deliverer from guilt and sin, from present sorrows or the wrath to come.

REV. W. GOODE.

### *Christ our Help in Trials and Afflictions.*

IN the Christian life I have duties to perform; but where shall I look, when of myself I can do nothing,—when I feel that I am not sufficient of myself to *think any thing as of myself?* The real believer is desirous of living to the glory of God, and therefore of acting agreeably to his calling, and suitably to the duties of his station. He would live in the exercises of faith and love; he would be lively in devotion, earnest in prayer, and ardent in praise; he would be patient in trial, diligent in duties, and active in services, in the elevation of holy joy, and the ready performance of willing obedience; but *when he would do good, evil is present with him*, and he feels *a law in his members, warring against the law of his mind*. *In himself, that is, in his flesh, dwelleth no good thing; who then shall deliver him from the body of sin and death?* who shall set him free from *the bondage of corruption*, and confirm him in *the glorious liberty of the children of God?* Never will he be better; never will he obtain any aid but by looking unto Jesus; and out of *his fulness* he must *receive grace for grace*; for he alone *of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*. The living branch must be united to the living Vine: it must *abide in the Vine* if it ever become fruitful, for separate from it the branch itself will soon wither and decay. The stream must be constantly supplied from the ever-flowing Fountain, or the stream itself will be dried up; but the branch, abiding in the Vine, will *bring forth much fruit*; and the stream, constantly supplied from the Fountain, will flow unceasingly, and spread its different currents to refresh and beautify the surrounding fields. Hence the Apostle was taught both *how to be abased and how to abound: every where, and in all things*, says he, *I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to suffer need*. *I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me*, Phil. iv. 12, 13. Is not the Lord Jesus still the same in himself? and is he not still the same to all his people? Are not his promises as really given, and as faithful and true to us, as they were to the Apostle? If we were living more by the faith of the Son of God, we should have a more abundant discovery of his glories and his grace, and



should thus bring them more into exercise and enjoyment. Let the prayer of faith be continually entreating the supplies of grace, from him who is full of grace and truth; in whom all fulness dwells, and who is the Head and Root of his believing people; and the promise of God secures the supply in rich communication to the glory of his name, and to the comfort and safety of our souls.

While in this body I must feel the effects of sin, in varied afflictions which lead down to the gates of death and of the grave. I know not what or which of the multiplied diseases and afflictions which sin has introduced, may seize upon my frame; nor when they may receive their commission from the great Disposer of all, from him who hath the keys of death and of the grave. But Jesus has taken away the sting of all, and can turn, by his presence and his grace, the bitterest sorrow into joy; death into life, and the grave into the gate of heaven. Though I go down to the grave, there has my Jesus been before me: there has he triumphed and passed through, and carried the gates of death to the hill of Sion. He who is the helper of his people, will not fail them at that moment when they most stand in need of his sustaining power. When all other helpers must fail, must withdraw for ever, then he will stand by and conduct through the gloomy vale: his rod and his staff will be their stay and their support; and when flesh and heart fail, he will be the strength of their heart and their portion for ever.

Read his promise, O humble believer! In the exercise of faith embrace it with holy delight: trust it with confident assurance: *Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name: thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee, Isa. xliii. 1—3, &c.* Oh, let me then adore and trust that blessed Jesus who is the helper, the only helper, but the all-sufficient helper, of helpless sinners! How absurd is the conduct of the man, and how dangerous his state, who

ventures to live without Christ; without seeking an interest in Christ; without placing himself under his eye and care, in the most implicit dependence and submission! Daily ~~afe~~ we reminded of our own weakness and insufficiency, and of our state of sin and misery. We have wants, which none but Jesus can supply; sins, which none but Jesus can pardon; enemies, which none but he can subdue; fears, which none but he can allay; trials, afflictions, temptations, and distresses, under which none but he, with his almighty power and grace, can support. Never can we meet affliction or death with peace and joy, but through him; nor shall we ever be able to stand before a holy God with acceptance, but as in him: yet these are circumstances into which we must all and every one ultimately be brought. Why then should the sinner neglect the only Saviour, the only one who can effectually help us, in this trying season? If the sinner comes to him, his promise assures him that he shall not be cast away: his grace is ready, and his fulness all-sufficient. But if the sinner reject him, and, with guilty unconcern, neglect to secure an interest in his care and blessings, nothing in heaven or in earth can ever deliver him from the sentence of the law, the curse of sin, and the wrath of God. In the Christian course through life, here must the believer be continually seeking the supplies he needs; and to run the Christian race aright, he must be looking off from all besides, to look to Jesus. . . .

Realize then, O believer! by faith, your privilege and your security: and when depressed with enemies, difficulties, and dangers, turn your eyes to him who is able to deliver. He has graciously encouraged your trust and confidence. What covenant love, what infinite wisdom, what almighty power, what constant care, what abounding grace, is treasured up in Jesus; and for the very purpose, that he might be the faithful, the effectual helper of his church! His promise secures the whole, in all their unfailing exercises, to promote and effect the eternal salvation of his people. How then can his promise fail; the promise of him who cannot lie, the promise of the God of truth, the promise of the Infinite, Eternal, Almighty Jehovah; a promise made, not for our worthiness, but of his own grace, and therefore not to be prevented, in its fulfilment, by the demerit of

the objects? He delights to magnify his grace in bestowing his blessings upon the unworthy, when suppliant at his feet. His ability to perform is beyond a doubt; and who can suspect his faithfulness or truth? Let not then a sense of unworthiness discourage the exercise of my faith; since it is not upon this I plead, when supplicating at the throne, but upon the infinite atonement, righteousness, and redemption of the Saviour, together with the promises of his grace made through him, and secured by the faithfulness of the Promiser to the most unworthy who fly to him for refuge. —Whatever may be my sin and guilt, he is able to deliver me by the merit of that precious blood that cleanseth from all sin, and through which we have redemption, even the forgiveness of sin. Whatever are my trials and distresses; however intricate and perplexing; still he is able to become my effectual helper to the very end. He bids me in all to trust in him, to cast my burden upon him, and he will sustain me, &c. The omnipresent, omniscient, the almighty, the infinite Jehovah can never be at a loss for means to effect deliverance, or to supply with grace and consolation. His help shall never fail, till I am got beyond all my sins and fears, beyond all my afflictions and distresses, beyond all my difficulties and dangers; and then, though I shall not need the same help that I stand in need of here below, he will be my Eternal Helper, my eternal security, my source of everlasting blessedness, in the world to come; for *who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter: nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*, Rom. viii. 35—39.

REV. W. GOODE.

*Faith sees that in God which answers all our fears, wants, and miseries.*

FAITH, saving faith, doth see that in God, in Christ, which answers to all our fears, wants, and miseries. For faith

closeth with the name of God: *Let him stay himself upon the name of God*, Isa. l. 10. Now there is that in God's name, that doth answer to all our fears and wants. For example, *The Lord descended in the clouds* (stood with Moses), *and proclaimed the name of the Lord*, Exod. xxxiv. 5. *The Lord, the Lord: Jehovah, Jehovah*, ver. 6: that is, one that gives being unto things that are not. Will you say, O that it were thus, or thus with me! But as Rachel mourned for her children, and could not be comforted, because they were not: so do I mourn after prayers, after ordinances, and humiliations, because they are not. Well, saith the Lord, be of good comfort, for my name is Jehovah, who gives being to things that are not. And this he repeateth, *The Lord; the Lord; or Jehovah, Jehovah*. Well, but though the Lord doth give being to things that are not, it doth not comfort me. For though I praise the Lord, that I can say my prayers are, and my duties are; yet he knows they are very weak, and my temptations very strong, and my lusts mighty; and therefore I am thus discouraged. Yet be of good comfort; for saith the Lord, my name is *לֵא*; that is, the strong, the mighty God. And therefore, though you be ever so weak, and your duties weak, yet I will carry on the work of my grace in you; and though your temptations be ever so strong, and your lusts strong, yet I am stronger: for my name is *לֵא*, the mighty God. O! but though God be strong, and able to help me, yet I fear that God is not willing to help me. I know that God is able, and that God is strong enough; but I fear he is not willing: and therefore I am thus discouraged. Yet be of good comfort, saith the Lord; for my name is Merciful, the Lord, the Lord; the mighty God. And as I am the mighty God, and therefore able to help thee; so my name is Merciful: I am willing to help thee. But though the Lord be willing to help me, yet I am a poor unworthy creature, and I have nothing to move God to help me. Yet be of good comfort; for, saith the Lord, my name is Gracious. I do not shew mercy because *you* are good, but because *I am* good; nor do I stand upon *your* desert; but I shew mercy out of *free* love, my name is Gracious. Oh! but I have been sinning, I have been sinning a long time, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty

years. Had I come in at first, I might have obtained mercy, but I have been sinning long : and therefore I fear there is no mercy for me. Yet, saith the Lord, he of good comfort, for my name is long suffering; gracious, and long suffering; slow to anger, and of long suffering. Oh! but I have sinned exceedingly, I have sinned abundantly; so many sins as I am never able to reckon up, and to humble myself. For I have broken all my promises with God, all the vows that I made unto him : and therefore, I am thus discouraged. Yet, saith he, be of good comfort, for *I am abundant in goodness and truth*: Art thou abundant in sin? I am abundant in goodness: And hast thou broken faith with me? Yet I am abundant in goodness, and in truth also. O! but though the Lord be thus unto his own chosen ones, such as David, Abraham, and Moses; yet I fear that he will not be so to me. Yes, saith the Lord, at verse 7, *Keeping mercy for thousands*: I have not spent all my mercy upon David, Abraham, Paul, and Peter; but I keep mercy for thousands. True: yet my sins recoil. I am the greatest sinner in the world; for I have committed all sorts and all kind of sin; and therefore I fear there is no hope for me. Yet, saith the Lord, be not discouraged; for *I keep mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin*; even all sorts, and all kind of sins; original sin, and actual sin; the sin of weakness, and the sin of presumption; the sin of ignorance, and the sin against knowledge; these, saith the Lord, I forgive, even all sorts, and all kind of sins: and this is my name for ever. O! but I am afraid to lay hold upon this promise; for I think this is a doctrine of liberty. Say not so, saith the Lord, at the next verse, *I will by no means clear the guilty*: but if there be ever a poor, drooping, fearing, trembling soul, who desires to know my name, lo, saith the Lord, this is my name, whereby I will be known for ever: the Lord Jehovah, that gives being to things that are not; *The mighty God: the merciful God; the gracious God; abundant in goodness, and in truth; reserving mercy for thousands; forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin*: and this is my name for ever. Now faith comes, and closeth with this name of God, leading the soul into this rich wardrobe, and so quiets the heart against all discouragements.

REV. W. BRIDGE.

*Trust in God our support in troublous Times.*

WOULD you be quiet, and have peace within in troublous times? Keep near to God; beware of any thing that may interpose betwixt you and your confidence. *It is good for me*, says the Psalmist, *to be near God*; not only to draw near, but to keep near, to cleave to him, and dwell in him: so the word imports. O the sweet calm of such a soul amidst all storms! Thus, once trusting and fixed, then no more fear: *he is not afraid of evil tidings*. Whatsoever sound is terrible in the ears of men, the noise of war, news of death, or even the sound of the trumpet in the last judgment, he hears all undisquieted. Nothing is unexpected. Being once fixed on God, then the heart may put cases to itself, and suppose all things imaginable, even the most terrible, and look for them; not troubled before trouble comes, with dark and dismal apprehensions, but satisfied in a quiet unmoved expectation of the hardest things. Whatsoever it is, though not thought on particularly before, yet the heart is not afraid of the news of it, because it is *fixed, trusting in the Lord*. Nothing can shake that foundation nor dissolve that union; therefore no fear. Yea, this assurance stays the heart in all things, how strange and unforeseen soever. All are foreseen to my God on whom I trust, yea, are fore-contrived and ordered by him. This is the impregnable fortress of a soul, all is at the disposal and command of my God; my Father rules all; what need I fear? The soul trusting on God is prepared for all, and in the saddest apprehensions of the soul, beyond hope, believes against hope; even in the darkest night, casts anchor in God, reposes on him when he sees no light, Isa. l, 10. Yea, *though he slay me*, says Job, *yet will I trust in him*; not merely, though I die, but *though he slay me*: when I see his hand lifted up to destroy me, yet from that same hand will I look for salvation. . . . Even in public troubles there is a calm in the believer's mind. He is satisfied that in those judgments that are inflicted, man shall be humbled and God exalted, Isa. ii, 11, and v. 16; and that in all tumults, and changes, and subversions of states, still his throne is fixed, and with that the believer's heart likewise. So, Psa. xxix. 10, *the Lord sitteth upon the flood: yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever*;

or, *sat in the flood*, possibly referring to the general deluge; yet then God sat quiet, and still *sitteth King for ever*. He steered the ark, and still guides his church through all. So Psalm xlv. throughout. In all commotions, the kingdom of Christ shall be spreading and growing, and the close of all shall be full victory on his side: and that is sufficient for the believer.

Amidst all disorders, God is ordering all wisely and justly, and to them that love him, graciously; therefore we ought not to be dismayed. Let us calm our thoughts with this, remember who it is that rules all, and disposes of peace and war, and all affairs, and we cannot wish them in better hands. I am persuaded, that in all the commotions of the world, when a believer thinks on this, it cannot but calm and compose his spirit exceedingly, *My Father rules all*. Let this so quiet our fears, as that withal it quicken our prayers, and stir us up to the work of this day,—repentant humble seeking unto God; seeing all is in his hands, our peace, our liberties, and our enemies that threaten to bereave us of both. O that the effect of all our troubles and dangers were to drive us more to God, to make us throng more about the throne of grace, to draw forth our King for our help! O our impenitence and unreformedness, that turns him to be our enemy, and that only! Men are nothing. And now, in so great straits, yet so little calling on him! O my brethren, what are we doing? O pray, pray. It is our God that commands all, and we may say it upon his own warrant, it is prayer that commands him.

LEIGHTON.

*The Benefit of minutely observing God's dealings in every circumstance.*

WERE we to observe more minutely, God's dealings with us in every particular instance, and in every circumstance he brings us to, it would tend greatly to strengthen our faith, and to fill us with admiration of his infinite wisdom and goodness, in ordering at all times every thing in a manner most suitable to our present frame of mind, and to his purpose concerning us. His eye is never taken away from his people, but constantly and very narrowly observes the workings of their hearts, and brings them into such cir-

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cumstances as are best suited to improve their graces and mortify their corruptions. Job had, by his sore and heavy trials, both his impatience discovered, and his patience improved. His latent corruptions, pride and its offspring impatience, were before unobserved; but his trial brought them to light. It was exactly suited to accomplish God's purpose respecting him, and his improvement in patience and humility. It brought out, by the blessing of God, the traitors from their secret recesses, and exposed them to view in all their vileness and deformity; and Job in the end was enabled to put his feet on the neck of those his dangerous and treacherous enemies. Sometimes I have found that a circumstance in itself insignificant and trifling, will produce amazing effects. A great blessing on a thing of nought, will make it great and really important in its consequences. We should view every thing, not as it is in itself, but as it is in the hand of a great God, who makes use of *things that are not, to bring to nought things that are*. If we let things pass, however small and of little importance, as if they happened by chance, we must not expect to have any support under trials, or to get any lasting improvement by them. But when we see every thing, even the least, as under a divine direction, and ordered with the best and kindest design, we are led to form great expectations from the issue of things, and to wait patiently to see the end designed by God. Thus the sting of every trouble is taken away, and the due improvement of a quiet acquiescence under it, is greatly promoted. Thus it was with Job. He saw the hand of God in all his sufferings and trials. He doth not say, 'The Lord gave, and the Sabeans and Chaldeans have taken away:' but 'the Lord hath taken away.' His eye was single, and fixed only on God in every thing.

REV. T. CHARLES.

*The History of Afflictive Dispensations should be fresh in the mind.*

RECOLLECT, and bring before you the history of afflictive dispensations, as minutely and circumstantially as you can. Why should you not remember past corrections as well as past mercies? Especially, when you have all imaginable reason to be satisfied from experience, that corrections are not among the least mer-

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cies. Recollect, therefore, what sicknesses you have been visited with; what afflictions you have met with in your circumstances: what troubles you have gone through in the loss of relations and friends; what disappointments in worldly things have fallen upon you; and what of these was ministered to you in different stages of your life; in childhood, youth, manhood, and advanced years; together with the peculiar circumstances of such afflictions; how you were brought into it; how long it continued; and in what manner it ended? Be at pains to digest in your mind the history of your troubles, and the circumstances of time and manner, as nearly as you can; for hereby you shall gain a great insight into the wisdom and love of God, in his afflictive dealings with you.

When you have your past troubles before you, endeavour to see what was the occasion of them. Now, as you are fully sensible, that God's hand was in it, and he does not willingly (and much less needlessly) grieve his children, try to discover what was God's design in them? and what that was, it is likely you shall be more able to see, now that Providence has, by what followed, opened to you the meaning of a correction, than you could well do when you were actually under it. Now, that you may the better enter into this inquiry, you must know that afflictions have mostly one of these three designs; either to bring God's children to repentance for some sin they have fallen into, as

the three days' pestilence of the Israelites, to bring them to repentance; and also, David for his sin, in numbering the people: or, secondly, to prevent some great snare to their souls they were running into, and in danger of: or, thirdly, to exercise and strengthen grace, because of some trying circumstances they should be afterwards in; as was the case of Joseph, before his exaltation. Examining your afflictions by these three rules, you may come to some certainty about the reasons of God's visiting you: either you were in some sin, as pride, covetousness, sloth; and God meant to shew it you, and bring you to repentance for it: or you were in danger by means of some circumstance of life you were going into, and God meant to stop you from entering into temptation: or God meant to make some use of you, you were not yet fit for; and therefore exercised you with some seasonable and suitable trouble. Now, besides the general design of correction, which is to humble us, increase faith and love, and engage us to live more above the world; besides the general, to search out the special design of every affliction in this manner, cannot but be exceedingly useful, inasmuch as hereby we shall gain a peculiar insight into the case of our souls, what it has been, and thereby what it is; and, at the same time, an experimental proof of God's good-will towards our spiritual and eternal interest, vastly confirming to our faith.

REV. S. WALKER.

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## SECTION VI.—THE PRIVILEGES OF THE CHRISTIAN.

### *The Christian's Experience of the Influence of the Holy Spirit.*

It is a dangerous thing to be insensible of the presence or absence of the Holy Spirit. For how shall his presence be sought, whose absence is not known? And how shall he, who returns to console us, be worthily received, if his presence be not felt? May the unction, therefore, be never removed from us, the unction 1 John ii. 27, which teaches us of all

things, that when the Holy Spirit comes he may find us ready. He who walks in the Spirit never remains in one state. His way is not in himself; but as the Spirit dispenses to him, according to his good pleasure, now more faintly, now more eagerly, he forgets the things which are behind, and reaches forth to the things which are before. Distrust not, when thou findest weariness and torpor; seek the hand of thy Guide, beseeching him to draw thee, till thou be enabled to run the

way of God's commandments. And, on the other hand, beware of presumptuous confidence, when thou walkest in the light of divine consolation, lest, when he withdraws his hand,\* thou be more dejected than it becomes a Christian to be, John ii. 44, &c. . . .

*Blessed are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven*, Matt. v. 3. Who is poorer in spirit than he who finds in himself no rest, no place where to lay his head? This is the divine economy, that he who feels the evil of sin, may learn to please God in newness of life; and he who hates his own habitation, a house of pollution and misery, may be invited to a house of glory, *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. No wonder that he finds it hard to believe! Does misery make a man happy? But whoever thou art, in these circumstances, doubt not: not misery, but mercy gives bliss; but then the proper seat of mercy is misery. Thus distress of mind produces humility. Wholesome is that weakness which needs the hand of the Physician, and blessed is that self-despair, through which God himself will raise and establish the heart. Even here the converted soul shall find the pleasures to which he is called a hundred-fold greater than those which he has relinquished, as well as, in the world to come, eternal life. Expect not from us a description of their nature. The Spirit alone reveals them: they are to be known only by experience. Not erudition, but unction teaches here; not knowledge, but inward consciousness comprehends them. That the memory of past sins should remain, and the stain of them be taken away, what power can effect this? The word alone, *quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword*. 'Thy sins are forgiven.' Let the Pharisee murmur, 'Who can forgive sins, but God alone?' He, who speaks thus to me, is God. His favour blots out guilt, so that sin shall remain on the memory, but no longer, as before, discolour it. Remove damnation, fear, confusion, as they are removed by full remission; and our past sins will not only cease to hurt us, but will also work together for good, that we may devoutly thank him who has forgiven them.

ST. BERNARD.

The Spirit of God, which in the first beginning of things moved upon the face of

the great deep, and invigorated the chaos or dark and confused heap of things, and caused light to shine out of that darkness, can, with the greatest ease, when he pleases, cause the light of divine consolation to arise and shine upon the dark and disconsolate soul. And this he often doth. I may here appeal to the *experience* of many good Christians, who sometimes find a sudden joy coming into their minds, *enlightening* their *understandings*, dispelling all clouds from thence, warming and enlivening their affections, and enabling them to discern the graces of God shining in their brightness, and to *feel* them vigorously acting in their souls, so that they have been, after a sort, *transfigured* with their Saviour, and wished, with St. Peter, that they might always dwell on that mount Tabor.

BP. BULL.

#### *The glorious Privileges of the meanest Christian.*

LET us discover, if it be possible, the most miserable man in this assembly; let us dissipate the darkness that covers him; let us raise him from that kind of grave in which his indigence and meanness conceal him. This man, unknown to the rest of mankind; this man, who seems hardly formed by the Creator into an intelligent existence; this man hath, however, the greatest and most glorious privileges. This man, being reconciled to God by religion, hath a right to aspire to the most noble and sublime objects of it. He hath a right to elevate his soul to God in ardent prayer, and, without the hazard of being taxed with vanity, he may assure himself, that God, the great God, encircled in glory, and surrounded with the praises of the blessed, will behold him, hear his prayer, and grant his request. This man hath a right to say to himself, The attention, that the Lord of nature gives to the government of the universe, to the wants of mankind, to the innumerable company of angels, and to his own felicity, doth not prevent this adorable being from attending to me; from occupying himself about my person, my children, my family, my house, my health, my substance, my salvation, my most minute concern, even a single *hair of my head*, Luke xxi. 18. This man hath a right of addressing God by names the most tender and mild, yea, if I may venture to speak so, by those most familiar names, which equals give each other; he

may call him his God, his master, his father, his friend. Believers have addressed God by each of these names, and God hath not only permitted them to do so, he hath even expressed his approbation of their taking these names in their mouths. This man hath a right of coming to eat with God at the Lord's table, and to live, if I may be allowed to speak so, to live with God, as a man lives with his friend. This man hath a right to apply to himself whatever is most great, most comfortable, most ecstatic in the mysteries of redemption, and to say to himself: For me the Divine intelligence revolved the plan of redemption; for me the Son of God was appointed before the foundation of the world to be a propitiatory sacrifice; for me in the fulness of time he took mortal flesh; for me he lived several years among men in this world; for me he pledged himself to the justice of his Father, and suffered such unparalleled punishment, as confounds reason and surpasses imagination; for me the Holy Spirit shook the heavens and the earth, and the sea and the dry land, Hag. ii. 6. and established a ministry, which he confirmed by healing the sick, by raising the dead, by casting out devils, and by subverting the whole order of nature. This man hath a right to aspire to the felicity of the immortal God, to the glory of the immortal God, to the throne of the immortal God. Arrived at the fatal hour, lying on his dying bed, reduced to the sight of useless friends, ineffectual remedies, unavailing tears, he hath a right to triumph over death, and to defy his disturbing, in the smallest degree, the tranquil calm that his soul enjoys; he hath a right to summon the gates of heaven to admit his soul, and to say to them, *Lift up your heads, O ye gates! even lift them up, ye everlasting doors!*

SAURIN.

#### *Motives for Christian Cheerfulness.*

SUCH are the obligations to cultivate a cheerful disposition which affect us as men, wishing to possess a sound mind in a healthful body; to taste the beauties and excellencies of the world in which we are placed; and to make a due return of gratitude and thankfulness to God, who placed us in it. Let us now consider the additional motives afforded us, as Christians, by the religion we profess.

The nature of that religion is sufficiently

expressed by the term so often used to denote it. It is a communication of good news, which should be received, in this case, as in all others, with a joy proportionable to its importance; and as it is of the highest importance, should be therefore productive of the greatest joy. The patriarchs and prophets, who viewed afar off that wonderful event which hath since taken place, were affected by it in a very sensible and lively manner. *Your father Abraham, says our Lord to the Jews, rejoiced to see my day; and he saw it, and was glad.* Isaiah is in raptures whenever he has occasion to touch upon the subject. *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings!—Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem; for the Lord hath comforted his people. Sing, O heavens, for the Lord hath done it; shout, ye lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein; for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.* When the predictions were accomplished, and the Divine Person who had been the subject of them made his appearance in the flesh, the heavenly messenger published the news in the following terms—*Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.* The Gospel was accordingly received by the first converts, on the day of Pentecost, *with gladness and singleness of heart.* Into whatsoever city or country it came, *there was great joy in that place;* and the joy, we find, was such that it raised its possessors above the world, and triumphed over all afflictions. Of other things they were often despoiled; but *their joy no man took from them.* In every situation and condition, they did then what the Apostle exhorts all Christians to do, *they rejoiced evermore.*

Nor can we wonder that the Gospel should, in its name and nature, portend joy, when we reflect that its end was to deliver mankind from sorrow. Sorrow first entered into the world, as a necessary attendant on sin, which filled the minds of men with disquietude and anxiety, their bodies with diseases and pains. The Gospel removes the former by the pardon it holds forth, and enables us cheerfully to bear the latter by the grace it confers; God therefore represents himself in it, as *the God of love, and of all consolation.*

Our Lord calls us to him, that he may *give us rest and refreshment*; that he may *wipe all tears from our eyes*; that we may *enter into our Master's joy*; and that *our joy may be full*. For this purpose he has sent us a blessed *Comforter, to abide with us for ever*, whose first fruits are *love, joy, and peace*; a Spirit, cheerful in himself, and making those cheerful who are partakers of him; cheerful in trouble, cheerful out of trouble; cheerful while they live, cheerful when they die; cheerful in using well the blessings of this life, cheerful in expecting the blessedness of the next; cheerful through faith, while they believe in the great and precious promises made to them; cheerful through hope, which depends upon their accomplishment; cheerful through charity, in doing acts of mercy and loving kindness; till they come to that land of plenty, where none shall want; to those regions of joy, from whence sorrow shall be for ever excluded.

BR. HORNE.

*The Christian's Joy in Meditating on the Cross of Christ.*

It indeed may yield great joy and sprightly consolation to us, to contemplate our Lord upon the cross, exercising his immense charity toward us, transacting all the work of our redemption, defeating all the enemies, and evacuating all the obstacles, of our salvation.

May we not delectably consider him as there stretching forth his arms of kindness, with them to embrace the world, and to receive all mankind under the wings of his protection? as there spreading out his hands, with them earnestly inviting and entreating us to accept the overtures of grace, procured by him for us?

Is it not sweet and satisfactory, to view our great High Priest on that high altar, offering up his own pure flesh, and pouring out his precious blood as a universal complete sacrifice, propitiatory for the sins of mankind?

Is it not a goodly object to behold humility and patience so gloriously rearing themselves above all worldly, all infernal pride and insolence; by the cross ascending unto the celestial throne of dignity and majesty superlative?

Is it not pleasant to contemplate our Lord there, standing erect, not only as a resolute sufferer, but as a noble conqueror,

where, *having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a solemn shew, triumphing over them*? Did ever any conqueror, loftily seated in his triumphal chariot, yield a spectacle so gallant and magnificent? Was ever tree adorned with trophies so pompous and splendid?

To the exterior view and carnal sense of men, our Lord was then indeed exposed to scorn and shame; but to spiritual and sincere discerning, all his and our enemies did there hang up as objects of contempt, utterly overthrown and undone.

There the devil, that *strong and sturdy one*, did hang up bound in chains, disarmed and rifled, quite baffled and confounded, mankind being rescued from his tyrannic power.

There the world, with its vain pomps, its counterfeit beauties, its bewitching pleasures, its fondly admired excellencies, did hang up all defaced and disparaged; as it appeared to St. Paul: for *God, saith he, forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ, by which the world is crucified to me, and I unto the world*.

There, in a most lively representation, and most admirable pattern, was exhibited, *the mortification of our flesh, with its affections and lusts*; and our *old man was crucified, that the body of sin might be destroyed*.

There our sins being, as St. Peter telleth us, *carried up by him unto the gibbet*, did hang as marks of his victorious prowess, as malefactors by him *condemned in the flesh*, as objects of our horror and hatred.

There death itself hung gasping, with its sting pulled out, and all its terrors quelled; his death having prevented ours, and induced immortality.

There all wrath, enmity, strife, (the banes of comfortable life,) did hang *abolished in his flesh*, and *slain upon the cross, by the blood whereof he made peace, and reconciled all things in heaven and earth*.

There manifold yokes of bondage, instruments of vexation, and principles of variance, even all *the handwriting of ordinances, that was against us*, did hang up *cancelled and nailed to the cross*.

So much sweet comfort by special consideration may be extracted from this event, which in appearance was most doleful, but in effect the most happy that ever by Providence was dispensed to the world.

DR. BARROW.



*The Christian's Joy in Meditating on the Divinity of Christ.*

I ASSURE you, in the most solemn manner, that I entertain this moment the fullest conviction that the Bible contains a true record of the revelations of God: more especially, I believe in the supreme divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. Him I regard daily with renewed satisfaction and joy, as the immediate object of religious worship. Him I revere as the utmost perfection which human nature can exhibit, and as the express image of the Godhead. I believe, with increasing intuitive knowledge, *that no man can come unto the Father, but by and through him.* I believe, that, through his person and mediation only, the human race can be conducted to its proper destination, restored to its original dignity, and attain to the complete purpose of eternal love. It is he on whom I am daily more and more constrained to place an entire dependence. As a mortal man, as a helpless sinner, as a philosopher, I stand in need of him. The more I examine all the different systems of philosophy, the more I am led to adore Jesus Christ as my Lord and my God. Christ, or despair, is my only alternative. His incarnation, his sufferings, death, and resurrection, his close affinity to mankind, serve to dispel all my darkness, to supply all my defects. LAVATER.

*The Glorifying in the Cross of Christ.*

THE willing susception, and the cheerful sustenance of the cross, is indeed the express condition, and the peculiar character of our Christianity; in signification whereof, it hath been from most ancient times a constant usage, to mark those who enter into it with the figure of it. The cross, as the instrument by which our peace with God was wrought, as the stage whereon our Lord did act the last part of his marvellous obedience, consummating our redemption, as the field wherein the captain of our salvation did achieve his noble victories, and erect his glorious trophies over all the enemies thereof, was well assumed to be the badge of our profession, the ensign of our spiritual warfare, the pledge of our constant adherence to our crucified Saviour; in relation to whom our chief hope is grounded, our great joy and sole

glory doth consist: for *God forbid*, saith St. Paul, *that I should glory save in the cross of Christ.*

Let it be *to the Jews a scandal*, or offensive to their fancy, prepossessed with expectations of a Messiah flourishing in secular pomp and prosperity; let it be *folly to the Greeks*, or seem absurd to men puffed up and corrupted in mind with fleshly notions and maxims of worldly craft, disposing them to value nothing which is not grateful to present sense or fancy, that God should put his own most beloved Son into so very sad and despicable a condition; that salvation from death and misery should be procured by so miserable a death; that eternal joy, glory, and happiness should issue from these fountains of sorrow and shame; that a person in external semblance devoted to so opprobrious usage, should be the Lord and Redeemer of mankind, the king and judge of all the world; let, I say, this doctrine be scandalous and distasteful to some persons tainted with prejudice; let it be strange and incredible to others blinded with self-conceit; let all the inconsiderate, all the proud, all the profane part of mankind, openly with their mouth; or closely in heart, slight and reject it: yet to us it must appear grateful and joyous; to us it is a faithful and most credible *proposition worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners*, in this way, of suffering for them. To us, who discern by a clearer light, and are endowed with a purer sense, kindled by the divine Spirit, from whence we may with comfortable satisfaction of mind apprehend and taste that God could not, in a higher measure, or fitter manner, illustrate his glorious attributes of goodness and justice, his infinite grace and mercy toward his poor creatures, his holy displeasure against wickedness, his impartial severity in punishing iniquity and impiety, or in vindicating his own sacred honour and authority, than by thus ordering his only Son, clothed with our nature, to suffer for us; that also true virtue and goodness could not otherwise be taught, be exemplified, be commended and impressed with greater advantage.

Since thereby, indeed, a charity and humanity so unparalleled, far transcending theirs who have been celebrated for devoting their lives out of love to their coun-

try, or kindness to their friends, a meekness so incomparable, a resolution so invincible, a patience so heroical, were manifested for the instruction and direction of men; since never were the vices and the vanities of the world, so prejudicial to the welfare of mankind, so remarkably discountenanced; since never any suffering could pretend to so worthy and beneficial effects, the expiation of the whole world's sins, and reconciliation of mankind to God, the which no other performance, no other sacrifice did ever aim to procure; since, in fine, no virtue had ever so glorious rewards as sovereign dignity to him that exercised it, and eternal happiness to those that imitate it; since, I say, there be such excellent uses and fruits of the cross borne by our Saviour; we can have no reason to be offended at it, or ashamed of it; but with all reason heartily should approve, and humbly adore the deep wisdom of God, together with all other his glorious attributes displayed therein. To whom therefore, as is most due, let us devoutly render all glory and praise. And,

*Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever. Amen.*

DR. BARROW.

*The Believer's Application to Christ in all relations of Life.*

LABOUR ever to get Christ into your ship; he will check every tempest, and calm every vexation that grows upon thee. When thou shalt consider that his truth, and person, and honour is embarked in the same vessel with thee, thou mayest safely resolve on one of these—either he will be my pilot in the ship, or my plank in the sea to carry me safe to land. If I suffer in his company, and as his member, he suffers with me; and then I may triumph to be made any way conformable unto Christ my Head. If I have Christ with me, there can no estate come, which can be cumbersome unto me. Have I a load of misery and infirmity, inward, outward, in mind, body, name, or estate? This takes away the vexation of all, when I consider it all comes from Christ, and it

all runs into Christ. It all comes from him as the wise disposer of his own body; and it all runs into him as the compassionate sharer with his own body. It all comes from him, who is the distributor of his Father's gifts; and it all runs into him who is the partaker of his members' sorrows. If I am weak in body, Christ my Head was wounded; if weak in mind, Christ my Head was heavy unto death. If I suffer in my estate, Christ my Head became poor, as poor as a servant, 2 Cor. viii. 9. Phil. ii. 7; if in my name, Christ my Head was esteemed vile, as vile as Beelzebub, Matt. xii. 24. Paul was comforted in the greatest tempest with the presence of an angel; how much more with the grace of Christ! When the thorn was in his flesh, and the buffets of Satan about his soul, yet then was his presence a plentiful protection; *My grace is sufficient for thee*: and he confesseth it elsewhere, *I am able to do all things through Christ that strengthens me*. Christ's head hath sanctified any thorns; his back, any furrows; his hands, any nails; his side, any spear; his heart, any sorrow that can come to mine. Again;—have I a great estate? am I loaden with abundance of earthly things? This takes away all the vexation, that I have Christ with me; his promise to sanctify it, his wisdom to manage it, his glory to be by it advanced, his word to be by it maintained, his appointed ones to be by it supplied, his Church to be by it repaired; in one word, his poverty to be by it relieved. For as Christ hath strength and compassion to take off the burden of our afflictions; so hath he poverty too, to ease that vexation which may grow from our abundance. If thou hadst a whole wardrobe of cast apparel, Christ hath more nakedness than all that can cover; if whole barns full of corn and cellars of wine, Christ hath more empty bowels, than all that can fill; if all the precious drugs in a country, Christ hath more sickness than all that can cure; if the power of a great prince, Christ hath more imprisonment than all that can enlarge; if a whole house full of silver and gold, Christ hath more distressed members to be comforted, more breaches in his Church to be repaired, more enemies of his Gospel to be opposed, more defenders of his faith to be supplied, more urgencies of his kingdom to be attended, than all that will serve for. Christ professeth him-

self to be still hungry, naked, sick and in prison, and to stand in need of our visits and supplies, Matt. xxv. 35—40. As all the good which Christ hath done, is ours, by reason of our communion with him; so all the evil we suffer, is Christ's, by reason of his compassion with us. The Apostle saith, that we *sit together with Christ in heavenly places*; and the same Apostle saith, that *the sufferings of Christ are made up in his members*, Eph. ii. 6. Col. i. 24. 'Nos ibi sedemus, et ille hic laborat;' we are glorified in him, and he pained in us. In all his honour we are honoured; and in all our affliction he is afflicted.

BP. REYNOLDS.

*The Believer's Comfort and Security from Christ, being the Keeper of all his Concerns.*

BUT he who is the Redeemer of the soul will surely not neglect the lesser interests of his people. If he so loved them as to give himself for them to redeem them unto God, how shall he not give them all things which his wisdom sees best for them? Hence he is represented,

As *the Keeper of all their concerns* in this world of uncertainty and of sin.—It is a consideration the most animating to the faith of the believer, that all power is committed into his hands, that he may give eternal life to his people; that exalted upon the throne in the nature of his brethren, he is the Head over all things for his Church. Not only are their individual concerns in his hand, but the whole world; its events, both great and small, are regulated by his wisdom as in subseriency to their God. *His eyes run to and fro throughout all the earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those that fear him.* His attention to their common concerns is beautifully expressed by the Psalmist;—*Jehovah is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night: the Lord shall preserve thee from all evil; he shall preserve thy soul. Jehovah shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in, from this time forth, and even for evermore,* Ps. cxxi. 5—8. While he hath the management of all things in providence, it might naturally be expected that the objects of his everlasting love, the redeemed with his blood, the subjects of his spiritual grace, who are partakers of his Spirit, should not be neglected in his government,

but obtain his peculiar attention: they might naturally expect that he who clothes the lilies, would much more clothe them; that he who feeds the birds of the air and the beasts of the field, would much more provide for his children; that if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground, nor a hair from the head, without the observation of the great Governor of all, their minutest concerns cannot be beneath his regard any more than the greatest beyond the limit of his infinite mind. With these views they might most reasonably quiet every anxious solicitude, and leave their concerns with him, Matt. vi. 25—34; and x. 29, 39. But his faithful promises secure to them the particular regards of his providential care: his promises, indeed, are so great and extensive, that, if they were to be literally understood, we must suppose that no affliction or distress could ever rest upon his people. This, however, we know is not the case: this he has declared will not be the case in the present state, and yet his promise ensures them that no evil shall befall them, no plague come nigh their dwelling: they need not be afraid for the terror by night, nor the arrow that flieth by day, nor the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the destruction that wasteth at noon day; when a thousand fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, it shall not come nigh them. (See that beautiful charter of Christian privileges in Ps. xci; and that delightful series of promises of help under, and deliverance from, all in Ps. xxxiv.)

But though these promises do not secure the deliverance of his people from all that we call evil, they must secure them from what *he* sees to be evil, and that all which he sends he will turn into a blessing. His wisdom, his knowledge, and his power, guided by his love, are ever employed in the direction of their concerns. His eye is ever upon them, and his ears attentive unto their prayers. Their business, their friends, their circumstances, their estate and persons, yea every event which shall happen to them, is under his especial superintendence, and guided by his sovereign pleasure. What an encouraging view is this in the present state of things! Faith may well satisfy the believer, and reconcile his mind to all the events of life. He need not be afraid of evil tidings, when his heart is steadfast trusting in the Lord. If all events are the appointment of his

providence, they cannot be wrong under such direction; and if ever they appear dark and inexplicable to us, this must arise from the weakness of our mind, the partial view which we take of his ways, and our consequent ignorance of his present and ultimate design. In the mysterious dispensations of his providence the people of his love may be both poor and afflicted, the redeemed with his blood and the heirs of his kingdom may be tried in the furnace of affliction, and harassed by the temptations of the enemy: but, since none of these things can take place without his appointment, it is most reasonable to conclude that there is a necessity for all, and a gracious design in all; while his promise assures them that *all things shall work together for good to them that love God, and are called according to his purpose*. How highly unreasonable and absurd is it to wish to take the management of the minutest concern out of his hand! Yet this is the language and tendency of our unbelieving fears, and the secret murmuring of dissatisfaction. Are they not, O believer, in the hands of him who loveth thee with an everlasting love; who chose thee for himself; who gave himself for thee, even to the death upon the cross; who is still thy Friend above; who hath called thee by his grace, and hath promised thee his kingdom? Why, then, should you doubt his goodness or his love, any more than his wisdom and his power? Surely he is worthy of our confidence: such views as these call for our faith and quiet dependence: and in thus resting upon him is the happiness of the Christian life, John xiv. 1, &c.; Phil. iv. 6, 7.

Let us, then, glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in this delightful character, and in the fulfilment of this covenant office. Let us recollect, that he who is the Keeper of Israel keepeth all the Israel of God by the power of God, that we may glorify him in the only way in which we can glorify him, by giving up our bodies and souls, ourselves and ours, and all our concerns absolutely to his keeping. Here, then, the believer may cheerfully exult, and say, All my concerns are safe; why then, what then, should I fear? Nothing can escape his knowledge, nothing can evade his wisdom, nothing can prevent his love, nothing can be beyond his power. I may go in and out, lie down and rise up in safety, for Jesus is my guard. I fight against my

sins, corruptions, temptations, and enemies, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of my faith. I triumph in the confidence of faith, that all things are mine, for my sake, and for my salvation, since I have surrendered myself to Christ, since he hath given himself to me, *since I am Christ's and Christ's is God's*, 1 Cor. iii. 23.

REV. W. GOODE.

*The Christian's Comfort from the Promises in every circumstance.*

THE promises are exceeding great and precious, in every point of view; whether we consider the greatness and variety of the blessings contained in them; the manner in which they are expressed by the great and condescending God; the certainty of their fulfilment to all true believers; and the happy effects and consequences of them in the souls of all real Christians in the world.

Every day we want a promise of an interest in a covenant God, to give us his love, his vital presence, his powerful protection, and bountiful supply of all our wants: such a promise we have in Heb. viii. 10. *I will be to them a God*. Every day I want a heart to know God: such a promise we have in Jer. xxiv. 7. *I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Jehovah;—and they shall return to me with their whole heart*. Every day I want a promise that I shall be enabled to love God: such a promise there is in Deut. xxx. 6. *I will circumcise thine heart to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live*. Every day I want a promise of the pardon of all my sins: such a promise there is in Psa. cxxx. 4. *There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared*. . . . Every day I want a promise of justification by the righteousness of Christ: such a promise there is in 1 Cor. i. 30. *Of God he is made unto us righteousness.—We are made the righteousness of God in him*, 2 Cor. v. 21. Every day I want a promise of a new heart: such a promise there is in Ezek. xxxvi. 26. *A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit I will put within you. I will take away the heart of stone, (i. e. a stubborn will,) and give you a heart of flesh, i. e. a soft, sensible, warm heart towards God and all heavenly objects*. Note, A new heart implies new apprehensions of the illustrious power and grace

of Christ, his fitness to save, his fulness to satisfy our wishes, and his beauty to endear himself to our souls. It also implies new determinations of the will and choice towards Christ our wisdom, as a prophet to remove our ignorance: our righteousness and redemption, as a priest to remove our guilt and slavery: sanctification, as our king to subdue our stubbornness, remove our rebellion, and restore the lost image of God's holiness to our souls. Every day I want a promise of victory over sin, and a power over the vile inclinations, the polluted passions, and vicious tastes of my soul: such a promise there is in Micah vii. 19. *He will subdue our iniquities.—Sin shall not have dominion over you*, Rom. vi. 14. *Ye, through the Spirit, shall mortify*, i. e. suppress and weaken, *the deeds*, i. e. the impure emotions, *of the body*; and thus *ye shall live*, Rom. viii. 13. i. e. a life of sanctification and joy. Every day I want to live above the spirit and unlawful love of the world: such a promise there is in John xvi. 33. *Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.—I am crucified to the world, and the world is crucified to me by the cross of Christ*, Gal. vi. 14. Every day I want strength against all the fraud and force of the temptations of the devil: such a promise there is in 1 Cor. x. 13. *No temptation hath taken you, but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted*, (and tried, or put to the proof,) *above that ye are able to bear; but will, with the temptation, make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.—The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations*, 2 Pet. ii. 9. *The God of peace will bruise Satan under your feet shortly*, Rom. xvi. 20. *We are not ignorant of his devices*, 2 Cor. ii. 11. *Ye shall be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*, Eph. vi. 11. Every day I desire to have a promise of wisdom and prudence from God, to direct me in every step of my moral and religious conduct: such a promise there is in Jam. i. 5. *If any man lack wisdom, let him ask it of God, who giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not*: He does not reproach us for our past foolishness, and numberless imprudences; he will not cut us to pieces with sharp words; but will give us wisdom with all the generosity of a God. Every day I want a promise of being the better for every thing

that befalls me, and of being the worse for no event which happens to me in the course of Divine Providence: such a promise there is in Rom. viii. 28. *All things work together for good to them that love God*. . . . Every day I want a promise of the supply of all temporal blessings: such promises abound all through the book of God. *Verily thou shalt be fed*, Psa. xxxvii. 3. *My God shall supply all your need*, Philip. iv. 19. *All things shall be added to you*, Matt. vi. 33. Do we want honour? \* God will bring us to honour, i. e. the esteem and veneration of men, while we strenuously walk in the line of duty. *Them that honour me, I will honour; while those that despise me shall be lightly esteemed*, 1 Sam. ii. 30. *Riches and honour are with me*, Prov. viii. 18. *She*, i. e. Wisdom, *shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her*, Prov. iv. 8. *If any man serve me, him will my Father honour*, John xii. 26. Do we want riches? God will give us riches, i. e. a competent supply of food and raiment, and a satisfaction of mind with that competency: this is true riches. *Godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come*, 1 Tim. iv. 8. *Ye are of more value than many sparrows*, Matt. x. 31. *If God so clothe the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?* Matt. vi. 30. *He that spared not his own Son, will he not with him freely give us all things?* Rom. viii. 32. Do we want health and pleasure? God has promised, that the ways of Christ shall be health to our flesh and marrow to our bones; *his ways are ways of pleasantness, and all his paths are peace*, Prov. iii. 8—17. Do we want the strong consolations of God under all the troubles and distresses of life? such promises we have in rich abundance in Psa. xci. *I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honour him.—Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me*, Psa.

\* Honour is a state of distinction and dignity in the estimation of God so as to be beyond the reach of just disdain, and above the force of rational and deserved suspicion. True religious honour consists in standing in the most honourable connexions with Christ—in possessing the most worthy dispositions, like Christ—in exerting the most honourable actions and graces to the glory of Christ—and in enjoying the honourable love and approbation from the heart and language of Christ. This honour infinitely transcends all the distinctions, and titles, and empty bubbles, that monarchs and worlds can bestow upon the proud and haughty sons of men.

1. 15. *I will strengthen them in the Lord*, Zech. x. 12. Do we want sanctified afflictions, and the presence of Christ in all our sorrows? such sweet assurances of his presence we have in Isa. lxiii. 9. *In all their affliction he was afflicted, the messenger of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them, and bare them and carried them all the days of old. We have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities*, Heb. iv. 15. He is a *merciful and faithful high priest*, Heb. ii. 14. It is really astonishing to observe how richly Christ has provided all possible supports under the troubles of life, and has secured to the believer the glorious sanctification of all kinds of affliction, so that all things shall work together for good. Every day we want the assistance of God in our duties, conflicts, and trials: such a promise there is in Rom. viii. 26. *The Spirit himself helpeth our infirmities*: such a promise there is in John xiv. 26. *The Spirit of Truth, the Comforter, shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance.—I will pour out the spirit of grace and supplication*, Zec. xii. 10. *Ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body*, Rom. viii. 13. Every day we want a promise of perseverance in grace: such a promise there is in John x. 28. *My sheep shall never perish.—Who shall separate us from the love of God?* Rom. viii. 35. *I will never turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me*, Jer. xxxii. 40. *This God is our God for ever and ever*, Psa. xlviii. 14. *Because I live, ye shall live also*, John xiv. 19.

DR. RYLAND.

*Encouragement which the Christian derives from the love of God through Christ.*

AND from hence we should learn faith and dependence on Christ in all our necessities, because we are under the protection and provision of him who careth for us, and is able to help us. A right judgment of God in Christ, and in his Gospel of salvation, will wonderfully strengthen the faith of men. Paul was not ashamed of persecutions, because he knew whom he had believed, he doubted neither of his care or power, and therefore he committed the keeping of his soul unto him against the last day, and therefore when all forsook him, he stood to the truth, *because*

*the Lord forsook him not*, 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17, 18. The reason why men trust in themselves, or their friends, is, because they are assured of their care and goodwill to help them. But if men did compare the affections of Christ to other succours, they would rather choose to build their hopes and assurances on him. This consideration of the care and the power of God made the three children at a point against the edict of an idolatrous king, *Our God is able to deliver us, and he will deliver us*, Dan. iii. 16, 17. Heb. xi. 17-19. Rom. iv. 20, 21. And this made Abraham at a point to offer his son without staggering, because he rested upon the promise and the power of God, who was able to raise him from the dead, from whence, in a sort, he had received him before, namely from a dead body and from a barren womb. And this is the ground of all diffidence, that men consider not the power and care of God towards them, Jer. xvii. 5, 8, but conceive of him as if he had forgotten to be gracious, as if he had cast them out of his sight, as if he had given over his thoughts of them, and that maketh them fear second causes, and seek unto things which cannot profit. And therefore the Lord suffereth second causes to go cross, to fail and disappoint a man, because he loveth to be glorified by our dependence on his all-sufficiency and protection. He suffereth friends to fail, to be off and on, promises to be uncertain, assurances to vanish, projections and frames of businesses to be shattered, that men may know how to trust him; for man being impotent in himself, must needs have something without himself to subsist upon. Now when a man findeth the creatures to be deceitful, and second causes vain, and considereth that God is *I Am*, a most certain rewarder of those that diligently seek him, then the soul findeth it good to draw near to God, to live under his fidelity, and to cast all its care on him, because he careth for it.

And indeed a right judgment of God will help us to employ our faith in any condition. In wealth men are apt to trust in their abundance, to stand upon their mountain, and to say, *I shall never be moved*. But now in this estate, if a man conceive aright of God, that it is he who giveth strength to be rich, and who giveth riches strength to do us good, that he can blast the greatest estate with an imperceptible consumption, and in the midst of a man's sufficiency make him be in straits, that

he can embitter all with his sore displeasure, and not suffer the floor nor the winepress to feed him; in great wisdom and deep counsels, if a man consider that the counsel of the Lord shall stand, and that he can turn the wisdom of oracles into foolishness, and catch the wise in their own craftiness; in great provisions of worldly strength and human combinations, if he consider that God can take off the wheels, and amaze the phantasies, and dissipate the affections, and melt the spirits, and way-lay the enterprises of the hugest hosts of men; that he can arm flies, and lice, and dust, and wind, and every small unexpected contingency against the strongest opposition; it must needs make him set his rest, and hang his confidences and assurances upon a higher principle. Again, in poverty and the extremest straits which a man can be in, if he consider that God is a God as well of the valleys as of the hills, that he will be seen in the mount, when his people are under the sword, and upon the altar; that the Lord knoweth the days of the up-right, and will satisfy them in the time of famine; that when the young lions famish for hunger, yet even then he can provide abundantly for his; that when things are marvellous unto us, then they are easy unto him; that when they are impossible unto us, then they are possible with him; that he can lead in a wilderness, and feed with an unknown and an unsuspected bread; that when the light of the sun and the moon shall fail, he can be an everlasting light and glory to his people: that *as a father*, so he pitieth; and *as a heavenly Father*, so he knoweth, and can supply all our needs; that when we are without any wisdom to disappoint, or strength to withstand the confederacies of men, when they come with chariots of iron and walls of brass, even then the eyes of the Lord run to and fro to shew himself valiant in the behalf of those that walk uprightly, that he can then order some accident, produce some engine, discover some way to extricate and to clear all; then will a man learn to be careful or distracted in nothing, but *in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make his request known unto him who is at hand, and who careth for him.*

The like may be said of men's spiritual condition: when men despair, as Cain, that their sin is greater than can be forgiven, the only ground is, because they judge not aright of God in Christ, they

look not on him in his Gospel as a God that careth for them, they do not lean upon the staff of his strength. Despair is an affection growing out of the sense of sin and wrath, as it is *malum arduum, instans, et ineluctabile*, an evil too heavy to be borne, and yet impossible to be removed. All victory ariseth either out of an inward power of our own, or by the assistance of foreign power, which is more than our own. Now then when we despair because of sin, this cometh—First, from the consideration of our own everlasting disability to break through sin by our own strength, and this is a good despair, which helpeth to drive men unto Christ.

Secondly, it cometh from a misconceiving either of the power or care of those which might assist us; sometimes from the misjudging of God's power, for the forgiveness of sins is an act of Omnipotency, and therefore when the Lord proclaimeth himself a forgiver of iniquity, transgression, and sin, he introduceth it with his titles of power, *the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, &c.*, *Exod. xxxiv. 6.* To pardon malefactors is a power and royalty which belongeth only unto princes. There is much strength required in bearing burdens, and therefore patience especially towards sinners, is an act of power, and impatience ever a sign of impotency; and therefore the weakest affections are ever most revengeful, children, old men, sick or indigent persons are ever most subject to anger, and least able to concoct an injury: so that to conceive sin greater than can be forgiven, is to misjudge the omnipotency of God. But ordinarily despair proceedeth from the misjudging of God's affection and good-will towards men; the soul conceives of him, as of one that hath utterly cast off all care or respect towards it. This is an error of God's benevolence, and the latitude of his mercy, and height of his thoughts towards sinners. He hath declared himself willing that all men should be saved, he hath set forth examples of the compass of his long-suffering, his invitations run in general terms, that no man may dare to preoccupate damnation, but look unto God, as one that careth for his soul. Let a man's sins be never so crimson, and his continuance therein never so obdurate, (I speak this for the prevention of despair, not for the encouragement of security or hardness,) yet as soon as he is willing to turn, God is willing to save, as soon as he hath an heart to attend, God

hath a tongue to speak salvation unto him. We see then the way to trust in Christ, is to look upon him as the *Bishop of our souls*, as the officer of our peace, as one that careth and provideth for us, as one that hath promised to save to the uttermost, to give supplies of his Spirit and grace in time of need, to give us daily bread, and life in abundance, to be with us always to the end of the world, never to fail us nor forsake us.

BP. REYNOLDS.

### *The Communion of Saints.*

FIRST then, the saints of God living in the church of Christ, have communion with God the Father: for the Apostles did therefore write that they to whom they wrote might have communion with them (*that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us*, saith St. John,) and did at the same time declare that their *communion was with the Father*. Wherefore seeing all the saints of God under the Gospel receiving the doctrine of the Apostles have communion with them; seeing the communion of the Apostles was the communion with the Father; it followeth that all the saints of God under the Gospel have a communion with God the Father. As we are the branches of the Vine, so the Father is the Husbandman; and thus the saints partake of his care and inspection. As *Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he was called the friend of God*; so all who are heirs of the faith of Abraham are made partakers of the same relation. Nor are we only friends, but also sons; for *behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*, 1 John iii. 1. Thus must we acknowledge that the saints of God have communion with the Father, because by the great and precious promises given unto them, they *become partakers of the divine nature*.

Secondly; the saints of God living in the church of God have communion with the Son of God; for, as the Apostle said, *Our communion is with the Father and the Son*; and this connexion is infallible, because *he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son*; and our Saviour prayed for all such as should *believe on him through the word of the Apostles, that they might be one, as the Father is one in him and he in the Father, that they also may be one in*

*both*.—*I in them, saith Christ, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one*. This communion of the saints with the Son of God is, as most evident, so most remarkable: He hath taken unto him our nature and infirmities; he hath taken upon him our sins, and the curse due unto them; while *we all have received of his fulness, and grace for grace*; and are all called to *the fellowship of his sufferings*, that we may *be conformable to his death*. What is the fellowship of brethren and coheirs, of the bridegroom and the spouse; what is the communion of members with the head, of branches with the vine, that is the communion of saints with Christ. For God *hath called us unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*.

Thirdly; the saints of God in the church of Christ have communion with the Holy Ghost: and the Apostle hath two ways assured us of the truth thereof, one rhetorically, by a seeming doubt, *If there be any fellowship of the Spirit*; the other devoutly praying for it, *The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with you all*. The saints are therefore such, because they partake of the Holy Ghost; for they are therefore holy because they are sanctified, and it is the Spirit alone that sanctifieth. Beside, the communion with the Father and the Son is wrought by the communication of the Spirit; for hereby do we become the sons of God, in that *we have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father*; and thereby do we become coheirs with Christ, in that *because we are sons God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father*; so that *we are no more servants, but sons; and if sons, then heirs of God through Christ*. This is the communion which the saints enjoy with the three Persons of the blessed Trinity; this is the heavenly fellowship represented unto entertaining Abraham, when *the Lord appeared unto him, and three men stood by him*: for our Saviour hath made us this most precious promise, *If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him*, John xiv. 23. Here is the soul of man made the habitation of God the Father, and of God the Son; and the presence of the Spirit cannot be wanting where those two are inhabiting; for, *if any*



*man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*, Rom. viii. 9. The Spirit therefore with the Father and the Son inhabiteth in the saints; for *Know ye not, saith the Apostle, that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* 1 Cor. iii. 16.

Fourthly; the saints of God in the church of Christ have communion with the holy angels. They who did foretel the birth of John the forerunner of Christ, they who did annunciate unto the blessed Virgin the conception of the Saviour of the world, they who sung a glorious hymn at the nativity of the Son of God, they who carried the soul of Lazarus into Abraham's bosom, they who appeared unto Christ from heaven in his agony to strengthen him, they who opened the prison-doors and brought the Apostles forth, they who at the end of the world shall sever the wicked from among the just, and gather together the elect of God, certainly they have a constant and perpetual relation to the children of God. Nay, *are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?* Heb. i. 14. They have a particular sense of our condition, for Christ hath assured us that *there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth*. And upon this relation, the angels, who are all the angels (that is, the messengers), of God, are yet called the angels of men, according to the admonition of Christ, *Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven*, Matt. xviii. 10. . . .

Again; the saints of God living in the church of Christ, have communion with all the saints living in the same church. *If we walk in the light, we have fellowship one with another*; we all have benefit of the same ordinances, all partake of the same promises, we all are endued with the graces of the same Spirit, all united with the same mutual love and affection, *keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*; all engrafted into the same stock, and so receiving life from the same root; all *holding the same head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*, Col. ii. 19. For in the philosophy of the Apostle, the nerves are not only the instruments of motion and sensation, but

of nutrition also; so that every member receiveth nourishment by their intervention from the head; and seeing the head of the body is Christ, and all the saints are members of that body, they all partake of the same nourishment, and so have all communion among themselves.

Lastly, the saints of God living in the church of Christ, are in communion with all the saints departed out of this life and admitted to the presence of God. Jerusalem sometimes is taken for the church on earth, sometimes for that part of the church which is in Heaven, to show that as both are represented by one, so both are but one city of God. Wherefore thus doth the Apostle speak to such as are called to the Christian faith, *Ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant*, Heb. xii. 22. Indeed the communion of the saints in the church of Christ with those who are departed is demonstrated by their communion with the saints alive; for if I have communion with a saint of God, as such, while he liveth here, I must still have communion with him when he is departed hence; because the foundation of that communion cannot be removed by death. The mystical union between Christ and his church, the spiritual conjunction of the members to the Head, is the true foundation of that communion which one member hath with another, all the members living and increasing by the same influence which they receive from him. But death, which is nothing else but the separation of the soul from the body, maketh no separation in the mystical union, no breach of the spiritual conjunction; and consequently there must continue the same communion, because there remaineth the same foundation. Indeed, the saint departed before his death had some communion with the hypocrite, as hearing the word, professing the faith, receiving the sacraments together; which being in things only external, as they were common to them both, and all such external actions ceasing in the person dead, the hypocrite remaining loseth all communion with the saint departing, and the saints surviving cease to have farther fellowship with the hypocrite

dying. But seeing the true and unfeigned holiness of man wrought by the powerful influence of the Spirit of God, not only remaineth, but also is improved after death; seeing the correspondence of the internal holiness was the true communion between their persons in their life, they cannot be said to be divided by death, which had no power over that sanctity by which they were first conjoined.

This communion of the saints in heaven and earth, upon the mystical union of Christ their head, being fundamental and internal, what acts or external operations it produceth is not so certain. That we communicate with them in hope of that happiness which they actually enjoy, is evident; that we have the Spirit of God given us as an earnest, and so a part of their felicity, is certain. But what they do in heaven in relation to us on earth, particularly considered, or what we ought to perform in reference to them in heaven, beside a reverential respect and study of imitation, is not revealed unto us in the Scriptures, nor can be concluded by necessary deduction from any principles of Christianity. They who first found this part of the article in the Creed, and delivered their exposition unto us, have made no greater enlargement of this communion, as to the saints of heaven, than the society of hope, esteem, and imitation on our side; of desires and supplications on their side: and what is now taught by the church of Rome is as unwarrantable so a novitious interpretation.

The necessity of the belief of this *communion of saints* appeareth,—First, in that it is proper to excite and encourage us to holiness of life. *If we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we have fellowship one with another*, 1 John i. 6. But *if we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. For what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?* 2 Cor. vi. 14. When Christ sent St. Paul to the Gentiles, it was *to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ*, Acts xxvi. 18. Except we be turned from darkness, except we be taken out of the power of Satan, which is the dominion of

sin, we cannot receive the inheritance among them who are sanctified, we cannot be thought *meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light*. Indeed there can be no communion where there is no similitude, no fellowship with God without some sanctity; because his nature is infinitely holy, and his actions are not subject to the least iniquity.

Secondly; the belief of the communion of saints is necessary to stir us up to a proportionate gratitude unto God, and a humble and cheerful acknowledgment of so great a benefit. We cannot but acknowledge that they are *exceeding great and precious promises*, by which we become *partakers of the divine nature*.—*Who am I?* said David, *and what is my life, that I should be son-in-law to the king?* 1 Sam. xviii. 18. What are the sons of men, what are they who are called to be saints, that they should have fellowship with God the Father? St. Philip the Apostle said unto our Saviour, *Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth*; whereas he hath not only shewn us, but come unto us with the Father, and dwelt within us by his Holy Spirit; he hath called us to the fellowship of the angels and archangels, of the cherubim and seraphim, to the glorious company of the Apostles, to the goodly fellowship of the prophets, to the noble army of martyrs, to the holy church militant on earth, and triumphant in heaven.

BP. PEARSON.

Man naturally loves honour and dignity; and indeed ambition to be great, if it were directed to right objects, would, instead of being a vice, be a cardinal virtue. Man is naturally a sociable, as well as an aspiring creature: these joint inclinations make men love to be incorporated in societies that have dignity annexed to them. The subject we are treating contains all the attractives that can reasonably affect one that loves society; it is made up of the choice of all other societies, contains all the true heroes that ever were, and comprehends the flower of the universe. The meanest member is promoted at the same time to a near relation to the infinite Creator, and to all the best of his creatures: allied to the spirits made perfect in Heaven, (Heb. xii. 23,) and to the excellent ones of the earth (Psal. xvi. 3.); he can claim kindred to the patriarchs, and prophets, and martyrs, and apostles, and all the other ex

cellent persons, who adorned this world, *and of whom it was not worthy*, (Heb. xi. 38.) though they be in Heaven and he on earth, one Spirit animates them both. Surely it is industrious stupidity, if one contemplate such a society, without being enamoured with it; and all other society, or multitude, is only so far valuable as it is subservient to it: a society headed by infinite perfection, cemented by eternal love, adorned with undecaying grace, supplied out of all-sufficient bliss, entitled to the inheritance of all things, (Rev. xxi. 7.) and guarded by Omnipotence: a society as ancient as the world, but more durable; and to whose interest the world and all that is in it are subservient: a society joined together by the strictest bands, where there is no interfering of interests but one common interest, and where at last there will be no opposition of tempers or sentiments; when its members, now many of them scattered far and near, but still united to their head, shall one day have a glad universal meeting in an eternal temple never to part, and where they shall celebrate a jubilee of inconceivable ecstasy and transport, without mixture, without interruption, and, which crowns all, without end.

MACLAURIN.

#### *The Christian's Consolation.*

The God of power and faithfulness says of his church, says of his people, *I the Lord keep it, I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it: I will preserve it night and day*, Isa. xxvii. 3. May this promise be our shield! be fulfilled to us evermore. And let us go on to lay up these precious pledges of heaven in our memory, and enrich our heart from them, by frequent meditation. They are the seed of faith. By these we are to be *made partakers of the divine nature*. *Partakers of the divine nature!* volumes cannot explain what is comprised in those few words. May we know what they mean by happy, happy experience! . . .

When the blast of sickness smites, and our strength becomes labour and sorrow; how miserable must be our condition, without an interest, and established interest in the all-glorious Redeemer!

Why do you cherish distrustful thoughts of the blessed God? Is he not boundless goodness? Is not his goodness greater than the heavens? Does not his mercy, that lovely attribute, endure for ever? All the kindness of the most endeared rela-

tions, compared with the tender compassions of a God in Christ, are no better than cruelty itself. Read the last chapter of Hosea. *Hide it within your heart*. Turn it into prayer to the King of heaven; and I hope it will be to your soul, as the dawning-day after a darksome night.

REV. J. HERVEY.

The consolations of the world are not worthy of the name; call them mirth, gaiety, or pleasure, those senseless and intoxicating things. Alas! these are far from that calm delight and satisfaction which deserves the name. Consolation is of a sober nature; it will bear consideration, reflection, and trial; it is peculiarly adapted to the day of trial, when all earthly delights retire, confess their insufficiency, and would willingly be forgotten, lest they should add affliction to the afflicted. How much, then, to be pitied is the ignorance of mankind, in lightly esteeming the only source of true felicity! Man needs consolation in a variety of situations, and seeks it in a variety of ways; but while forsaking the Fountain of living waters for the broken cisterns of earthly gratification, he constantly fails of its attainment. Well might it be asked of many, in the eager pursuit of worldly objects, *Are the consolations of God small with thee*, while, slighting the directions of his word, and the discoveries of his grace, you are *feeding on ashes*, or wearying yourselves with very vanity! How often, also, has the believer to reproach himself for the power of unbelief, and the infatuations of a mind deceived by the delusive stratagems of sin and Satan, which have drawn his heart aside from real joys, to lying vanities! While living in the strength of his privileges, and in the maintenance of his true character, let sorrows come, let afflictions seize the mortal frame, let tribulation and trouble assail the spirit, in Christ the believer has yet a source of consolation, of abounding consolation, of *everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace*, 2 Thess. ii. 16.

To have a *right* to this consolation, we must indeed be in Christ; it belongs to his office as head of the Church, and it flows from him to all his believing people, by that union wherein they are one with him, and whereby they dwell in him, and he in them, by the in-dwelling of his Spirit. No sinner can be entitled to any blessing as in himself, but only as viewed in Christ, but

when one with Christ, and Christ with him, the fulness of the Redeemer is also his. . . .

As we value, then, the consolations of Christ, let us carefully avoid that which naturally and necessarily leads from him. Though nothing shall eternally separate his people from him, there are many things which at present may cause his face to be hid from them; and indulged iniquity will always have this dreadful effect. Spiritual consolation is most delicate in its nature; it is wounded and interrupted by every folly and indulged corruption. Without walking close with God, no communion can be maintained with him. Let us, then, fear sin as we love the consolations of the Saviour. . . .

Right thoughts of Christ are essentially necessary for the present peace and comfort of the believer in his daily walk and warfare. Many a sincere and humble-minded Christian, for want of distinct views of the person, offices, and grace of the Redeemer, goes mourning from day to day, who might otherwise rejoice in the Lord, and triumph in the God of his salvation. Clear views of this adorable Person, the work which he has performed, the covenant characters which he sustains, and the blessings he bestows, together with the gracious way in which he bestows them, form the surest antidote against legal and unbelieving fears. These often destroy the comfort of the sincerest believer, darken his evidences, and distress his soul. In proportion only as Christ is apprehended by faith, these fears give way and yield to the certainty of Scriptural hope and joy. When convinced of the fulness of his atonement, the everlasting sufficiency of his righteousness, the freeness and riches of his grace, the unchangeableness of his love, and the faithfulness of his care, the humble believer learns to rest on him in peaceful satisfaction. Amidst daily infirmities he rejoices in the confidence of daily pardon; finds renewed peace with God; and maintains an assured hope of future blessings—a hope which shall never make ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost. In the stability of his dependence he feels secure; and, though weak in himself, is strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. When ready to sink under a sense of insufficiency for the trials and duties of life, the all-sufficiency of the Lord, who is his righteousness and strength, revives

and consoles his spirit. These views alone can preserve peace in the conscience, or holy serenity in the soul. When, indeed, the believer is engaged in the spiritual conflict, the power of his enemies and the burden of his sins may be more felt than they were before, while under their absolute controul and domineering power—as the man who is striving against the tide feels more of its influence than he who glides gently down with its current,—but, still, the same source of grace and spiritual aid is open, while fighting the good fight of faith; and, as daily need drives him continually to the Saviour, for his blood to cleanse, and his Spirit and grace to subdue his corruptions, here he finds the mercy and the grace all-sufficient in every time of error.

REV. W. GOODR.

### *The Wonderful Union of Christ's People.*

THE fellowship which we have with Jesus Christ, is the most perfect and the most admirable of all unions that exist, either in nature, or in the society of men. It has this also in common with other unions, that it combines the subjects of it not with him only, but also with one another, cementing them so closely together, that, since they are joined unto him, they are all together but one and the same body, separated in this respect from all others, united and knit together most closely within themselves. When you take a nearer view of this congregation, you will discover, that there never was an assemblage, either in the world, or among the people of God, consisting of individuals so different and contrary to each other, as those whom Jesus Christ has called together to form his church; nor is there any society, whose connexion is so intimate, firm, and indissoluble, as that of the different subjects, whom he has put under his sceptre.

He has ranged under his laws, Jews and Gentiles, Greeks and Barbarians, learned and unlearned, wild idolaters, proud philosophers, civilized and savage nations, in short, people of every climate, of all professions, manners, and inclinations, of every age and sex; tractable and incorrigible, chaste and debauched, virtuous and profligate. The oracles of God had foretold this under the most magnificent emblems: *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, &c.* This extraordinary prophecy

has never been fulfilled but by Jesus, who has assembled in the bosom of his church, in the unity of his body, the most uncivilized men, the most ungovernable spirits, and the most savage dispositions. What other power, but that of our Saviour, could have ranged into one body, under the same yoke, a yoke so uneasy to the flesh, so many extravagant spirits, so many haughty tempers, the ignorant and the learned, the dull and the lively, the superstitious and the impious. This surely is no less a miracle than to make *the lion eat straw like the ox, or the leopard lie down with the kid, &c.*, Isa. xi. 6—8.

However different the members may be which constitute the church, they are but one body, being animated and governed by one and the same Spirit, the Spirit of Jesus. For he that hath not the Spirit of Christ, is not of Christ. He is not a member of his body. From the fulness of this Spirit, as from a living and inexhaustible fountain, each individual receives one and the same life, one and the same blood, one and the same principle of motion. Every one considers the weal and woe of his brethren, as his own. Whatever inequality or diversity in nature there might have been among them, is done away and equalized by grace. Here the poor have plenty, and the rich lose their possessions; the foolish become wise, and the wise fools. J. DAILLE.

#### *The Union in Heart and Mind between all Christians.*

THERE doth follow a moral unity of hearts and minds between all of them; as it is said of the primitive Christians, that *the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one soul.* And this moral unity is fourfold.

1. A unity of faith, in the great and necessary doctrines of salvation, or in the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ, called by the Apostle, the foundation, the principles of the doctrines of Christ, form of sound words, the portion or analogy of faith, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, and him crucified; the doctrine and truth, which is after godliness, the faith of the Gospel, the faith of Jesus, the mystery of godliness, the rule by which we should walk; called by the ancients, the seed of doctrines, the character of the church, the rule which is common to small and great: in one word, whatever doctrine there is, the knowledge whereof, and the assent thereto, is simply necessary to salvation;

in this, all who shall be saved, do first or last most unanimously agree. Differences there may be, and usually are, in less necessary points, which are matters '*Questionum, non fidei*,' as St. Austin speaks: *for we know but in part*, and are not yet come to be perfect men: and till the members have attained unto their full stature, there cannot be expected a universal consent, and harmony of judgments in all points, even among the best and most learned men; in which case, notwithstanding, we should receive one another in love and brotherly communion, because God himself receiveth those who thus differ, into his favour; but the Spirit of God doth never fail to lead all that shall be saved into all necessary truths, and to preserve them from any damnable and pernicious doctrine.

2. Unity in obedience, wherein all holy men do agree, although some may much exceed others in their progress and degrees of holiness, (as we may see by comparing the testimony given to Asa, and to Josiah,) such are repentance from dead works, without which we cannot be saved. Reliance upon Christ alone, by a sincere and unfeigned faith, for life and salvation. A true love of the Lord Jesus, and of all that are his. A sincere regard to all God's commandments, and a hatred of every false way. A desire to fear God's name, and a pressure of heart to cleave unto him, and follow him fully. Lastly, self-denial, submitting our will and reason to God's word and will. There may be great differences in the spiritual growth and degrees of holiness, between one Christian and the other; some sick, others healthy; some strong, others weak; some little children, others young men; some bruised reeds, and smoking flax, others bold as a lion. But this is, '*Obedientia parvis magnisque communis.*'

3. Unity in worship: for though different churches may have different observances in the external forms of divine service, yet in the substantials of worship, they all agree, viz.—that God is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth, and to be sanctified in all those that draw nigh unto him. That we are to call upon God, only in the name of Christ, as our alone Advocate and Mediator, *giving thanks to God the Father by him.* That we are not to worship creatures, who cannot know our hearts, nor answer our prayers, nor supply our wants, in whom we are not re-

quired to believe, but are to hold the Head, and to *keep ourselves from idols*.

4. Unity in ends and designs : for being brethren in the same family, and fellow-citizens with one another, and of the household of faith; the same enemies to oppose; the same interests and common salvation to look after, they consequently prosecute the same ends, and do not only *walk by the same rule*, but in so doing, do *mind the same things*, Phil. iii. 16. It is here, being in part carnal, they do too much seek, and serve themselves : but so far forth as they have the same Spirit, they are of the same mind with the Apostle, to prefer the honour of Christ, and the service of his church, above their own interest, according to what our Saviour hath taught us, *If any man come after me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple*. The glory of God, the progress of the Gospel, the advancement of Christ's kingdom, the subversion of the kingdom of Satan, the comforts and commandments of the church of Christ, are in their hearts and endeavours still to promote; as members of the natural, so they of the spiritual body, have all a care one of another; the end of the parts is the safety of the whole; they are all partakers of one spiritual nature, and all heirs of one common inheritance; and, therefore, as one principal fruit of the communion of saints, they aim at the same ends, and prosecute the same designs, joining together in all Christian services of love against their common enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

So that where the fundamentals of religion are safe, and all sides unanimously embraced, and the differences purely problematical, and such as do not at all endanger the vitals and essentials of religion, mutual meekness, tenderness, and forbearance are to be used, as amongst brethren and fellow-members. Disputes are to be managed with all calmness of spirit; without passion, animosity, exasperation, invidious consequences, or any thing tending to the violation of brotherly love. Hereby we preserve the communion of saints, when we own one another as brethren, and not as strangers: we credit the Gospel of peace, and adorn our mutual profession of the same common truth. We make way to the more clear discovery of truth, when no passion or prejudice doth dazzle our eyes, or overcloud our judgments. We stop the

mouths, prevent the insultations, and take away the advantages which the common adversary promiseth to himself, by our differences and dissensions. **BR. REYNOLDS.**

*The Glory and Happiness of the Believer, though now obscured and hid to the world, shall be gloriously manifested hereafter.*

IN that the Apostle saith, that at the appearance of Christ, true believers shall appear with him in glory, we may easily conclude,

That the happiness and glory of true believers shall not always be hid, but it shall one day appear even to the whole world, yea, both men and angels shall one day, namely, at the day of judgment, see the happiness and glory of true believers, and be eye-witnesses of the same: for why?—the Lord Jesus at that day shall shew himself to the sight of men and angels, in endless majesty and glory in his own person; and he shall at that day come to be glorified in his saints, and to be made marvellous in all them that believe: so speaks the Apostle in plain terms, 2 Thess. i. 10. At his coming he shall not only be infinitely glorious in his own person, but he shall also be glorified in his saints, he glorifying them, and they appearing with him in glory: therein they shall shew forth his grace, his power, and his goodness, and that to the astonishment and admiration of all that shall look upon them, even to the amazement of men and angels, Rom. viii. 19. The Apostle in saying, that *the creature*, that is, the whole frame of the world, *waiteth when the sons of God shall be revealed*, teacheth also this point, that there shall be a time of revelation, there shall come a day when the glory of God's children shall be revealed to all the world: the reason of this is plain,

Because there must be a time, when even the most wicked shall justify the goodness and mercy of God, in his dealing towards his children, and be convinced of folly in themselves: now that is not in this world. Here they look on the troubles of God's children, but see not their comforts; they behold their present condition in affliction, but discern not their happiness, and so account their life folly and madness; therefore, there must be a time when the happiness and glory of God's children shall be openly revealed, and set before the eyes of all the world, that even the most wicked may look on it, and (will they will

they) justify the goodness of God towards his children, and be convinced of folly in themselves, and be forced to confess, and say, Oh, we fools thought their life folly and madness, but now we see they are dear in the sight of the Lord, and have their portion among his saints.

Now then let this be laid up in the hearts of all true believers, as a ground of great comfort to them; let them consider that, howsoever their beauty and glory is in this world obscured and overshadowed, and is not seen of the world, it lies hid from the world, either under affliction, or under the excellent grace of humility, which the world accounts baseness, they walking humbly before the Lord: that humility of theirs is as a cloud to hide away their glory from the eye of the world; yet, let them be patient for a time, and let them consider that it shall not always be hid, but the time will come when it shall evidently appear, and be open to the view of the whole world, yea, the time shall come that men and angels shall see it with admiration; yea, which is most sweet and comfortable to be thought on, even they that here have turned their glory into shame, as David saith, Psal. iv. 2, that is, have reproached them for their holy and religious carriage, and cast that in their teeth as a reproach, and loaded them with odious and foul names even in respect of that, the day shall come when they shall see that (which now they account their shame) crowned with glory, and shall be forced to change their note and sing a new song, yea, confessing their own folly, shall cry out, and say: We fools thought their life base and full of dishonour, and now behold their unspeakable brightness and glory. Let this be remembered as a matter of sweet comfort to all God's children, yea, let this encourage them even to be more vile, as David said, 2 Sam. vi. 22, when Michal mocked him for dancing before the ark, *I will yet be more vile than thus*, so let all God's children be more vile, that is, more low in their own eyes, and walk more humbly before the Lord, and so be more base, as the world esteems of them, and the time shall come when they shall be had in honour of those that now contemn them; yea, those that now despise them, if they repent not of that sin, at the coming of the Lord Jesus, shall see them in glory, and shall be forced to acknowledge their glory to their own everlasting shame and confusion.

REV. E. ELTON.

### *The dying Christian's Consolation.*

No men have greater need of supporting joys, than dying men; and those joys must be fetched from our eternal joy. As heavenly delights are sweetest, when nothing earthly is joined with them; so the delights of dying Christians are oftentimes the sweetest they ever had. What a prophetic blessing had dying Isaac and Jacob for their sons! With what a heavenly song and divine benediction did Moses conclude his life! What heavenly advice and prayer had the disciples from their Lord when he was about to leave them! When Paul was ready to be offered up, what heavenly exhortation and advice did he give the Philippians, Timothy, and the Elders of Ephesus! How near to Heaven was John in Patmos, but a little before his translation thither! It is the general temper of the saints, to be then most heavenly when they are nearest Heaven. If it be thy case, Reader, to perceive thy dying time draw on, O where should thy heart now be, but with Christ! Methinks thou shouldst even behold him standing by thee, and should bespeak him as thy father, thy husband, thy physician, thy friend. Methinks thou shouldst, as it were, see the angels about thee, waiting to perform their last office to thy soul; even those angels, which disdained not to carry into Abraham's bosom the soul of Lazarus, nor will think much to conduct thee thither. Look upon thy pain and sickness, as Jacob did on Joseph's chariots, and let thy spirit revive within thee, and say, *It is enough, Christ is yet alive; because he lives, I shall live also!* John xiv. 19. Dost thou need the choicest cordials? Here are choicer than the world can afford; here are all the joys of heaven, even the vision of God, and Christ, and whatsoever the blessed here possess; these dainties are offered thee by the hand of Christ; he hath written the receipt in the promises of the Gospel; he hath prepared the ingredients in heaven; only put forth the hand of faith, and feed upon them, and rejoice, and live. The Lord saith to thee, as to Elijah, *Arise and eat, because the journey is too great for thee*. Though it be not long yet the way is miry; therefore obey his voice, arise and eat, and in the strength of that meat thou mayest go to the mount of God; and, like Moses, die in the mount, whither thou goest up; and say,

as Simeon, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace ; for my eye of faith hath seen thy salvation,* Luke ii. 29, 30.

BAXTER.

*Divine Support in the hour of death from the Atonement of Christ.*

THE atonement of Christ is a Divine support in the agonies of death. At such a season a thousand past iniquities will sometimes crowd in upon the memory, and will fill the soul with horror, and perhaps Satan the accuser makes a dreadful assault upon the conscience at the same time, and torments the spirit with painful agonies : but the most formidable terrors, the sharpest agonies find a relief here ; the very sting of death is taken away by the death of Christ. *The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin,* to condemn us, *is the law of God ; but thanks be to God through Christ Jesus,* 1 Cor. xv. 56. who hath answered the demands of the condemning law, and taken away the sting of death by his atoning sacrifice. . . .

Why then art thou so terrified, O my soul, at the thoughts of dying ? Why all these shudderings of the flesh, and these agonies of spirit at the apprehensions of death and the grave ? Are the sins of thy life great and numerous ? Do they throng in upon thy conscience, and fill thy thoughts with tumult and terror ? Remember the time, the dark and dismal hour, when Jesus thy Saviour bore all those very sins in his own body on the tree. There the demands of Divine Justice were all answered, and sin has now no power to condemn the saint, nor has death power to hurt him in his best interests. *Who shall condemn ? It is Christ that has died ; yea, rather has risen again,* as a complete conqueror over death. And is not Christ thy head, thy Redeemer, and the captain of thy salvation ? . . .

O happy day and happy hour indeed, that shall finish the long absence of my beloved, and place me within sight of my adored Jesus ? When shall I see that lovely, that illustrious friend, who laid down his own life to rescue mine, his own valuable life to ransom a worm, a rebel that deserved to die ? He suffered, he groaned, he died ; but he rose again : the blessed Saviour arose ; he lives, he reigns exalted over all the creation. Faith beholds him risen, and reigning, but it is *through a glass,* it is at a distance, and *but darkly.* I wait, I hope for a more

divine pleasure : it is a delight worth dying for to *behold him face to face, to see him as he is,* to converse with his wondrous person, and to survey his glories. Alas, my soul is too patient of this long distance and separation. O for the wings of love to bear my spirit upward in holy breathings ! Methinks I would long to be near him, to be with him, to give him my highest praises and thanks for my share in his dying love. I would rise to join with the blessed acclamations, the holy songs of the saints on high, while they behold their exalted Saviour. How sweet their songs ! How loud their acclamations ! This is the man, the God-man who died for me ! This is the Son of God, who was buffeted, who was crowned with thorns, who endured exquisite anguish, and unknown sorrows for me ; who was scourged, and wounded, and crucified for me ! This is the glorious person, *the Lamb of God, who washed me from my sins in his own blood.* Blessing, honour, and salvation to his holy name for ever and ever. Amen.

DR. WATTS.

*Necessity for the World being embittered to the Christian.*

ONE special advantage of these fires, is, the purifying of a Christian's heart from the love of the world and of present things. It is true, the world at best is base and despicable, in respect of the high estate and hopes of a believer ; yet still, there is somewhat within him, that would bend him downwards, and draw him to too much complacency in outward things, if they were much to his mind. Too kind usage might sometimes make him forget himself and think himself at home, at least so much as not to entertain those longings after home, and that ardent progress homewards, that become him. It is good for us, certainly, to find hardship, and enmities, and contempts here, and to find them frequent, that we may not think them strange, but ourselves strangers, and may think it were strange for us to be otherwise entertained. This keeps the affections more clear and disengaged, sets them upward. Thus the Lord makes the world displeasing to his own, that they may turn in to him, and seek all their consolations in himself. . . .

Thus he embitters the breast of the world, to wean them ; makes the world hate them, that they may the more easily hate it ; suffers them not to settle upon it,



and fall into a complacency with it, but makes it unpleasant to them by many and sharp afflictions, that they may with the more willingness come off and be untied from it, and that they may remember home the more, and seek their comforts above; that finding so little below, they may turn unto him, and delight themselves in communion with him. That the sweet incense of their prayers may ascend the more thick, he kindles those fires of trials to them. For though it should not be so, yet so it is, that in times of ease they would easily grow remiss and formal in that duty. . . .

It is a hard task, and many times comes but slowly forward, to teach the heart, by discourse and speculation, to sit loose from the world at all sides, not to cleave to the best things in it, though we be compassed about with them, *though riches do increase, yet not to set our hearts on them*, Psa. lxii. 10; not to trust in such *uncertain things* as they are, as the Apostle speaks, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Therefore God is pleased to choose the more effectual way to teach his own the right and pure exercise of faith, either by withholding or withdrawing those things from them. He makes them relish the sweetness of spiritual comfort, by depriving them of those outward comforts whereon they were in most danger to have doated to excess, and so to have forgotten themselves and him. When they are reduced to necessity, and experimentally trained up easily to let go their hold of any thing earthly, and to stay themselves only upon their rock, this is the very refining of their faith, by those losses and afflictions wherewith they are exercised. They who learn bodily exercises, as fencing, &c., are not taught by sitting still, and hearing rules, or seeing others practise, but they learn by exercising themselves. The way to profit in the art of believing, or of coming to this spiritual activity of faith, is, to be often put to that work in the most difficult way, to make up all wants and losses in God, and to sweeten the bitterest griefs with his loving kindness.

LEIGHTON.

*Sickness the best season for forming a right judgment of the things of time and eternity.*

ALL sickness and sorrow arise from sin. If we were not unholy creatures, we could not be unhappy creatures. Because of the ill habit, occasioned by transgression, every element fights against our health by

changes and inclemencies; and the very food we eat, while it nourishes for a time, lays the foundation of disease in our bodies, already prepared by their own weakness and ill temperament to receive and increase it.

Sickness is a dismal scourge to the ungodly, and a painful spur to the gracious. To the one, when the law flashes its lightnings upon the guilty conscience, and thunders all its terrors upon the startled soul, then disease comes forward as the horrible harbinger of miseries everlasting; but, to the other, a solemn remembrancer, through the gospel of grace, both of the vanity of all earthly things, and of the nearer and near approach to immortal glory.

When sickness comes and grace can meet it; O what a just representation do they make to the soul concerning the poor honours, riches, cares, and pleasures, of this transitory world! How unimportant do all the struggles for power, splendour, titles, wealth, and pre-eminence, which have employed and enraged the past or present ages, appear! How childish and mean do those objects pass before us, for which men have lavished their time, and thrown away their souls! What bubbles, what nonsense, what glaring and horrid stupidity, have filled and directed, have engaged and overwhelmed the counsels of the greatest among men; and all to no other profit than a little fleeting vanity, with a rapid descent to lasting oblivion or ruin! Thus the soul feels, when it is quickened by sickness, to consider the low and passing affairs of earth and of time.

On the contrary, how inexpressibly great and tremendous do the things of God and eternity rise fully in view to the mind! O the worth of worlds, what are they, in some of these soul-searching moments! How is the soul astonished with the grandeur of God, and with the deep and wide importance of all that belongs to him!—Wrapt in the solemn contemplation of unutterable glories, how doth the spirit of a man tremblingly examine and solicitously inquire into the truth and extent of its interest in them! And if grace seal an answer of peace upon the heart, how doth it flutter with gladness at its safety, and how will the whole frame be agitated with a new delight in the sure prospect of eternal concern in these valuable, these only valuable things!

The Christian will be wakeningly alive to all this and more, if his disorder be such,

as can admit of reflection. Blessed be God, however, whether he can thus reflect or not; yet, being a Christian, his state is equally safe with God, through his gracious Redeemer. Whatever be the frame, the promise is sure, the covenant of God is ordered in all things and sure, and sure and faithful is God himself to perform it. It is comfortable, and indeed desirable, to have pleasant foretastes and feelings of grace and glory, under the pain or decay of the body; but they are no otherwise material to the true believer's security for heaven. If he hath not these perceptions during the short time of his sickness, he will have them abundantly after it, if it end in his dissolution; or, if it do not thus end, the want of them is a loud admonition to *make his calling and election sure*, in the days that may yet be appointed him.

If we cannot think of Christ, through the power of disease, O what a happiness is it to be assured that Christ thinks constantly and effectually of us! He *maketh all our bed in our sickness*; that is, he turns the whole frame of our condition in it for our best advantage.

O Lord, leave me not, poor and helpless sinner that I am, in my most healthful state; leave me not especially, I beseech thee, in the low, the languid, the distressing circumstances of infirmity and disease! Jesus, Master, thou art said to have borne our sicknesses, because thou barest the sins which occasioned them; take, take away from my conscience the guilt which brought disease, and then the worst part of its misery shall likewise be done away. And when, through my feebleness or disorder, I cannot act faith upon thy love; O lift my drooping spirit, carry me as one of thine own lambs in thy bosom, enfold me in thy gracious arms, and let my soul wholly commit itself, and give up its all, in quiet resignation to thee! If thou raise me from my sickness, grant that it may be for the setting forth of thy glory among men. If thou take me by sickness from this world, O thou<sup>st</sup> hope and life of my soul, receive me to thyself for my everlasting happiness, and present me, as another monument of sovereign grace, before the great assembly of saints and angels in thy kingdom of heaven. AMB. SERLE.

*The Value of the Scriptures in time of Sickness.*

THE Scriptures (and believe me, as I speak from daily experience) are a treasure

of comfort. One who had drank deep of the cup of sorrow declares, that they *rejoice the heart*; and that for his own part, if his *delight had not been in the Divine law, he should have perished in his trouble*, Psa. cxix. 92. *These things*, says the favourite Disciple, *write we unto you* (not barely that you may have joy, but) *that your joy may be full*, 1 John i. 4. And St. Paul adds, that whatever things are written by the Spirit of inspiration, are written for our benefit, *that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope*, Rom. xv. 4; that blessed hope of eternal life, which is an anchor to the soul, in all the storms of adversity; which is the oil of gladness, swimming above all the waves of affliction. By having recourse to diversions and amusements, in preference to the strong consolations suggested in the Bible, we act as injudiciously, we shall be deceived as certainly, as if, amidst the sultry heats of summer, we should seek cooling refreshment from a painted tree, and shun the embowering shady covert of a real grove.

If we are afflicted, the Scriptures acquaint us, that our afflictions are the chastisements of a Father, not the scourges of an enemy. They give us assurance, that the all-disposing Providence will not suffer us to be afflicted above what we are able to bear, 1 Cor. x. 13: that they shall turn to our good, and bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness: that they are light; are only for a moment, and yet shall work out for us a weight, an eternal weight of glory. Can all the volumes of heathen morality suggest, or all the recreations in the world afford, such rational and solid consolation? Without these consolations, afflictions will be like a latent sore, smarting and rankling in the heart; will produce discontent with our condition, and repining at Providence; a melancholy temper, and a fretful carriage. Trifling company, and worldly pleasures, will serve only to aggravate the misery, and make us inwardly mourn, that while others are in the elevation of mirth, we are pressed with a weight of calamity. Whereas, by means of those sovereign consolations, afflictions may be improved to the health of the mind, and become a most salutary expedient for furthering our spiritual happiness.

Can any thing be more animating than the privileges recorded in the character of our salvation, the Scriptures? There

we are told, that as many as truly believe in Jesus Christ, are children of the Almighty; that the Lord who commandeth the waters, the glorious God who maketh the thunder, the everlasting King, who ruleth all things in heaven and earth, is their Father; he pities them as a father pities his own children, *Psa. ciii. 13*; and that a mother may sooner forget her sucking child, than he can remit his tender care for their present welfare and endless felicity, *Isa. xlix. 15*: that, because we are sinners, Christ Jesus, with infinitely more than paternal tenderness, bore our sins, and expiated all our guilt, in his own bleeding body upon the tree, *1 Pet. ii. 24*. Because we frequently offend, and always fail, our merciful High Priest ever liveth to make intercession for us, and to plead his Divine merits in our behalf, *Heb. vii. 25*. Because we have many corruptions within, and are assaulted by various temptations without, we have a promise of the blessed Spirit to subdue our corruptions, (*Gal. iii. 14. Ezek. xxxvi. 27.*) and renew us after the image of him who created us, *Col. iii. 10*. Because we are liable to manifold misfortunes, and visited with a variety of sorrows, the same Holy Spirit is promised, under the amiable character of a Comforter, *John xiv. 16. Luke xi. 13*. Because all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof (the youth, the beauty, the wealth, all mortal accomplishments, and every worldly enjoyment) is withering, and transient as the flower of the field, (*Isa. xl. 6.*) the Scriptures direct our view, and consign over to our faith, a most incomparable, reversionary inheritance; an inheritance reserved in Heaven for us, which is *incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, *1 Pet. i. 4*.

Are these things, I would ask the physicians, likely to deject the mind, or oppress it with heaviness? Need their patients fear an aggravation of distresses from the offer, from the enjoyment of such blessings? Much more reasonably might the bleeding wound fly from the lenient hand, dread the healing balm, and court its cure from the viper's envenomed tooth. Have these truths a tendency to engender gloomy apprehensions, as the medical gentlemen are too apt to imagine, or do these increase the load which galls an afflicted mind? Rather, what heart (that attends to, and believes such glad tidings) can forbear even leaping for joy? These are calculated to put off our sackcloth, and gird

us with gladness; are enough to turn the groans of grief into the songs of gratitude.

Cheered by these reviving considerations, supported by this blessed hope, the ancient Christians were more than conquerors over all their calamities; they even gloried in tribulations, because these were the appointed way to the kingdom of Heaven, *Acts xiv. 22*. They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing that they had, in the world above, a better and more enduring substance, *Heb. x. 34*. They perceived with complacency the decay of their earthly tabernacle; because there remained for them, after their dissolution, *a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*, *2 Cor. v. 1*. Perhaps we may not arrive at such heights of heroic and triumphant exultation; but surely we should try those remedies, which in their case were so surprisingly and happily successful.

Upon the whole, a peaceful composure of mind, and calm resignation to the all-wise will of God; a holy joy in the merits of our ever-blessed Redeemer, and a well-grounded hope of unutterable and immortal bliss, in a better world; these, these are more absolutely needful for a case like this, and will do more towards relief, than all the drugs that nature produces. And very sure I am, that these noble anodynes are dispensed no where but in the Scriptures; are to be procured no otherwise than by prayer. Other methods may stupify for a moment, but will not remove the pain, much less introduce permanent ease.

I speak not this from mere speculation, or conjectural probability. I have myself experienced the efficacy of the preceding expedients for these desirable purposes. Having been a sort of veteran in affliction, I have been under a necessity of applying these consolations; and have the utmost reason to bear witness, that there are none like them. The Scriptures are the treasury of joy and peace, and the truly religious are generally the most uniformly cheerful.

REV. J. HERVEY.

*The Effects of our Troubles, which shew them to be sanctified in us.*

FOR sad and afflictive providences in what kind or degree soever they befall us, we may warrantably conclude they are blessings to us, and come from the love of God—when they come in a proper season; when we have need of them, either to pre-

vent some sin we are falling into, or recover us out of a remiss, supine, and careless frame of spirit into which we are fallen; when *if need be, we are in heaviness*; when they are fitted both for quality and degree to work properly upon our predominant corruptions, then they look like sanctified strokes. The wisdom of God is much seen in the choice of his rods. It is usual with God to smite us in those very comforts which stole away too much of the love and delight of our souls from God; to cross us in those things from which we raised up too great expectations of comfort. These providences bespeak the jealousy of God over us, and his care to prevent far worse evils by these sad, but needful strokes. It is a good sign our troubles are sanctified to us, when they turn our hearts against sin, and not against God. Happy afflictions which make the soul fall out and quarrel only with sin.—It is a sure sign that afflicting providences are sanctified when they purge the heart from sin, and leave both heart and life more pure, heavenly, mortified, and humble, than they found them. Sanctified afflictions are cleansers; they pull down the pride, refine the earthliness, and purge out the vanity of the spirit. How many Christians can bear witness to this truth! After some sharp affliction has been upon them, how is the earthliness of their hearts purged! Oh how serious, humble, and heavenly are they, till the impressions made upon them by afflictions is worn off, and their deceitful lusts have again entangled them! And this is the reason why we are so often under the discipline of the rod. Let a Christian be but two or three years without an affliction, and he is almost good for nothing; he cannot pray, or meditate, or discourse as he was wont to do; but when a new affliction comes, now he can find his tongue, and comes to his knees again. It is a good sign that afflicting providences are sanctified to us, when we draw near to God under them, and turn to him that smites us. A wicked man under affliction *revolts more and more,—turns not to him that smites him*, but grows worse than before; formality is turned into stupidity and indolence. But if God afflicts his own people with a sanctified rod, it awakens them to a more earnest seeking of God; it makes them pray more frequently, spiritually, and fervently than ever. When Paul was buffeted by

Satan, he *brought the Lord thrice*. We may conclude our afflictions to be sanctified, and to come from the love of God to us when they do not alienate our hearts from God, but inflame our love to him. This is a sure rule, whatever ends in the increase of our love to God, proceeds from the love of God to us. We may call our afflictions sanctified, when divine teachings accompany them to our souls. *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law*. Sanctified afflictions teach us sensibly and effectually, when the Spirit accompanies them, the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the necessity of securing things that cannot be shaken. Never does a Christian take a truer measure both of his corruption and graces than under the rod. Now a man sees that filthiness which has been long contracting in prosperity, what interest the creature has in the heart, how little faith, patience, resignation, and self-denial we can find, when God calls us to the exercise of them. O it is a blessed sign that that trouble is sanctified, which makes a man thus turn in upon his own heart, search it, and humble himself before the Lord for the evils of it!

In the next place, let us take into consideration those other providences which are comfortable and pleasant. Here the question will be, how the sanctification of these providences may be discovered to us? For answering this question, I shall lay down two sorts of rules; one negative, the other positive.

It is a sign that comfort is not sanctified to us, which comes not ordinarily in the way of prayer. Then the gifts of Providence are only such as are bestowed on the worst of men, and are not the fruits of love. Whatever success, prosperity, or comfort men acquire by sinful means and indirect courses, are not sanctified mercies to them. God has cursed the ways of sin, and no blessing can follow them. Whatever prosperity or success makes men forget God, and cast off the care of duty, is not sanctified to them. When prosperity is abused to sensuality, and merely serves as fuel to maintain fleshly lusts, it is not sanctified. It is a sign that prosperity is not sanctified to men, when it swells the heart with pride and self-conceitedness. That success is not sanctified to men which takes them off from their duty, and makes them wholly negligent, or very much in-

disposed to it, Jer. ii. 31. Nor can we think that prosperity sanctified, which wholly swallows up the souls of men in their own enjoyments, and makes them regardless of public miseries or sins, Amos vi. 4-6.

But then, on the other hand, those mercies and comforts are undoubtedly sanctified to men, which humble their souls before God in the sense of their own vileness and unworthiness of them, Gen. xxxii. 10. Sanctified mercies are commonly turned into cautions against sin, Ezra ix. 13. They will engage a man's heart in love to the God of his mercies. They never satisfy a man as his portion, nor will the soul accept all the prosperity in the world upon that score, Heb. xi. 26. Nor do they make men regardless of public sins or miseries. It is a sure sign that mercies are sanctified when they make the soul more enlarged for God in duty, 2 Chron. xvii. 5, 6. That which is obtained by prayer, and returned to God again in due praise, carries its own testimonials with it, that it came from the love of God, and is a sanctified mercy to the soul. FLAVELL.

*Difference between God's Chastisements of his People, and his vindictive Punishments.*

THE difference between chastisements, and purely vindictive punishments, appears in three things:

I. In the causes from whence they proceed. The severest sufferings of the godly are not the effects of the Divine vengeance. It is true, they are evidences of God's displeasure against them for sin, but not of hatred; for being reconciled to them in Christ, he bears an unchangeable affection to them, and love cannot hate, though it may be angry. The motive that excites God to correct them, is love; according to that testimony of the Apostle, *Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth*, Heb. xii. 6. As sometimes out of his severest displeasure he forbears to strike, and condemns obstinate sinners to prosperity here, so from the tenderest mercy he afflicts his own. But purely vindictive judgments proceed from mere wrath.

II. They differ in their measures. The evils that believers suffer are always proportioned to their strength. They are not the sudden eruptions of anger, but deliberate dispensations. David deprecates God's judgment as it is opposed to favour; *Enter not into judgment with thy ser-*

*vant, O Lord, Psal. cxliii. 2; and Jeremiah desires God's judgment as it is opposed to fury, O Lord, correct me, but with judgment, not in thine anger, Jer. x. 24. It is the gracious promise of God to David, 2 Sam. vii. 14, with respect to Solomon, If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men; that is, chastise him moderately; for in the style of the Scripture, as things are magnified by the epithet divine or of God, as the cedars of God, that is, very tall; and Nineveh is called the city of God,\* that is, very great: so, to signify things that are in a mediocrity, the Scripture uses the epithet human or of men. And according to the rule of opposition, the rod of God is an extraordinary affliction which destroys the sinner; it is such a punishment as a man can neither inflict nor endure; but the rod of men is a moderate correction, that doth not exceed the strength of the patient. But every purely vindictive punishment which the law pronounces, is in proportion to the nature of the crime, not the strength of the criminal.*

III. They are distinguished by the intention and end of God in inflicting them. In chastisements God primarily designs the profit of his people, that they may be *partakers of his holiness*, Heb. xii. 10. When they are secure and carnal, he awakens conscience by the sharp voice of the rod, to reflect upon sin, to make them observant for the future, to render their affections more indifferent to the world and stronger towards Heaven. The Apostle expresses the nature of chastisements, *When we are judged, we are chastened* or instructed *by the Lord*, 1 Cor. xi. 32: they are more lively lessons than those which are by the word alone, and make a deeper impression upon the heart. David acknowledges, *Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now I have kept thy word*, Psal. cxix. 67. Corrupt nature makes God's favours pernicious, but his grace makes our punishments profitable. Briefly, they are not satisfactions for what is passed, but admonitions for the time to come. But purely vindictive judgments are not inflicted for the reformation of an offender, but to preserve the honour of the Sovereign, and public order, and to make compensation for the breach of the law. If any advantage accrue to the offender, it is acci-

\* See Jonah iii. 3. in the Hebrew.

dental, and beside the intention of the judge. The end of chastisements upon believers, is to prevent their final destruction: *When we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world*, 1 Cor. xi. 32. And this sweetens and allays all their sufferings, as the Psalmist declares, *Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head*, Psa. cxli. 5. But the vindictive punishment of a malefactor is not to prevent his condemnation; for death is sometimes the sentence. In this respect the temporal evils that befall the wicked and the godly, though materially the same, yet legally differ; for to the wicked they are so many earnest of the complete payment they shall make to justice in another world, the beginning of eternal sorrows; but to the godly they are in order to their salvation. They are as the Red Sea, through which the Israelites passed to the land of promise; but the Egyptians were drowned in it. Briefly, their sufferings differ as much in their issue, as the kingdoms of heaven and hell.

DR. BATES.

*My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord*, I do not afflict thee in hatred, but in covenant love. My design is to mortify the body of sin, and therefore I give thee this wholesome physic. Thou hast many bad humours and corruptions, for which I have appointed this sovereign medicine. Trust my skill—believe my love—depend upon mine arm—and thou wilt infallibly find it profitable to the spirit, however painful to the flesh. Wait, and the end shall be blessed.

To this truth the prophet Isaiah bears a clear testimony. He explains the Lord's design in afflicting his people; and tells them, it was to purge them from their iniquity, to keep them from the love of sin, and to restrain the practice of it. He afflicted them in mercy; but he afflicted their enemies in justice. *Hath he smitten Israel as he smote those that smote him?* No, he has not. Or *is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him?* No, he chastises his in love; he has appointed the measure, the time, the degree, of their correction: *In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind; by this (moderate affliction) therefore, shall the iniquity of Jacob*

*be purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin*—to keep him back from sin in general, and from the sin of idolatry in particular, as it follows in the prophet: *When he maketh all the stones of the altar like chalk-stones that are beaten in sunder, then the groves and images shall not stand up*. The altar, at which they offered their idol-worship, shall be broken down, like stones burned in pieces for lime, and the groves and images shall not stand up, but shall be broken down also. These happy effects shall be brought about by sanctified affliction—iniquity shall be purged—sin shall be restrained—idolatry shall be thrown down. And God says, this shall be *all* the fruit and end of his chastening. He tells his people of his design, that they might know their affliction would bring forth good fruit, and that they might wait patiently for the fulfilling of his promise. Blessed are all they that wait for him: they shall never be disappointed of their hope.

How gracious is God in his dealings with his children! He provides the best for them, informs them of it, and, because they have a fallen nature opposite to his holy mind and will, an enemy to his glory, and to their own peace, he acquaints them with his design in subduing it. He appoints affliction for this end. It is *the chastening of the Lord*. He promises them strength to bear it, and comfort under it. Nothing but good shall flow from it. Iniquity, their worst enemy, shall be crucified; actual sin, springing from the iniquity of their nature, shall be mortified; the heart shall be deadened to its old idols, and as it dies to them, it shall be happier in the love of God. O blessed cross! what mercies dost thou bring with thee. Is not that blessed indeed, which, under God, produces such unspeakable mercies? Take it up then, O my soul; bear it patiently, and expect the choicest blessings of the Father's love from it. Why dost thou refuse? It is heavy. It is painful. True; but what makes it so? The burden is from thy rebel will. The pain comes from thy corruption, unwilling to be mortified. Take it up in faith, and thou wilt find strength enough to bear it, and blessings enough to make it a matter of all joy. Lord God, reconcile me to my daily cross. May thy will in it be done. Mortify sin, weaken its power, deaden its affections and lusts. Only, Lord, whatever cross thou sendest, give grace with it, that I may bear it patiently, and may wait for its promised fruit. Thou knowest what would

stop me in my heavenly journey; if it be my bosom favourite, the dearest object of my love, O tear it from my heart. Thou hast given me a desire to have every rival dethroned. O come, and reign alone in me, almighty Jesus, and subdue whatever opposes thy lawful government. My Saviour and my God, make all within me feel the power of thy cross. Crucify the body of sin. Spare nothing that would hinder my walking with thee, or would deprive me of thy friendship and favours. I bless thee, I worship thee, I glorify thee, for this infinite grace, that thou hast made me willing to have all mine idols pulled down. On thee I depend every moment for keeping them down. O my loving Jesus, carry on thy work, and, in thine own way, subdue sin in me; let me be planted together in the likeness of thy death, that I may be also in the likeness of thy resurrection—dead to sin, but alive to God. I ask this for thy great name's sake. Let it be thy good pleasure to hear and answer. I believe thou wilt. I have thy word for it. There I rest. Amen and Amen.

REV. W. ROMAINE.

*We should not judge of Providences till we see the end of them.*

JUDGE nothing before the time. When the end cometh, pass a judgment on providential dispensations; not before. *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord*, Psal. cvii. 43. . . .

God works often above means, sometimes without them; nay, sometimes contrary to them: but it is a settled rule with him, which every believer has found true in experience, viz.—he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation. There may appear some flaws at present, but there will be none in the end; it will appear to be the right way. *Wherefore, humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up*, James iv. 10. Humbling providences are sweetest in the end, for they bring a man to himself; and till a man be thoroughly emptied of self, he can never, as he ought, improve Christ. What though God bereave you of children, friends, substance, health, *all is well*. There is no empty, void space, but what he himself fills up. 'Surely,' says one, 'he dieth oft whose life is bound up in the dying creature; as oft as the creature fails, his hope fails, his heart fails; when the creature

dieth, his hope giveth up the ghost.' He only lives an unchangeable life, that by faith can live on an unchangeable God. Do not say what his end is, till you see it. Many a saint has eaten his own words for want of this. *I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardst the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee*, Psal. xxxi. 22. These hasty speeches are seldom right ones.

Bring the promise and a promising God close together; whatever be the promise, consider he is faithful that hath promised; all intervening difficulties should be viewed in the light of the promise. What is that? Why, all things are yours, and *all things work together for good*. We need our crosses as well as our comforts. Are we through many tribulations to enter the kingdom? Then we must have these tribulations ere we possess it.

REV. J. HILL.

*Our Sin in looking to second causes in Affliction.*

THE Shunamitess, when she answered *It is well*, 2 Kings iv. 26, wholly looks over all second causes, and goes directly to the first. God hath done it, all events are appointed and ordered by him. *My times*, says the Psalmist, *are in thine hands*, Psal. xxxi. 15. All that concerns me thou hast the care of, and thou wilt perform it. There is nothing wherein believers shew a meaner spirit, and yet few sins beset them more easily, than an anxious concern and fretful care about some outward things, which have in themselves no power to do good or evil, any otherwise than as instruments in God's hands to attain his appointed end. Shall we quarrel with the sword, because it suffered itself to be drawn? or be angry with the air, because it is infected? No second cause can act without the direction of the first; there is no design in the instrument, as an instrument that acts, but as ordered by him who uses it. It has grieved me to hear Christians aggravate their trials, and debase their profession, by looking back to this and the other circumstance, dwelling upon that, as what gave rise to the whole affliction. 'O! if I had but had such advice—had I but thought!—That I should consent my child should go to such a place!—That I should not foresee, &c.' And yet all the while the man believes God's purposes and decrees, and that he worketh all things after the counsel of his

own will. How beneath a Christian is this ! Can you set aside divine counsels, or would you alter an ordered covenant ? Use the means, but live upon God's power, wisdom, and faithfulness, who blesses or blasts them just as he pleases. To do otherwise, is to make your burden a thousand times heavier than it is.

*It is well.* That is the only reconciling principle under the severest trials; and even under lighter strokes, mere casualties as they appear to us, the soul can have no rest till he issues his concern here. I have known little insignificancies very vexing and grievous; and the more so, because one thinks how easily they might have been prevented. But the best way to quiet the soul is to eye God's hand. *I was dumb,* says the Psalmist, *I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,* Psal. xxxix. 9.

REV. J. HILL.

*When one Affliction is past, we must prepare for others.*

WHEN one hour of suffering is past, we must hold ourselves in readiness for another conflict. The hour which had been appointed for the inward agony of Christ, was already past; now he speaks of another hour that was coming on, of which he afterwards says, *This is your hour, and the power of darkness.* Our blessed Saviour has his eye on that hour, and gives us a noble pattern, to teach us that we should never be too secure, though we have got the better of a temptation. All the towering steep hills of trials are not yet ascended, and when we think we have gained the summit, another hill may present itself unexpectedly to our view. Skilful mariners, after weathering out a storm, immediately repair the ship and tackling, that they may be able to ride out another storm. Thus should we prepare ourselves for the storms of trials and temptations.

RAMBACH.

*Saints must not expect to fare better than Christ did.*

I HOPE there is none of us can take it ill that Christ hath imposed so severe a duty upon us; for we may assure ourselves he requires no more of us than what himself hath undergone before, so that we can suffer nothing for him but what he hath suffered before for us. Have we grief and trouble in our hearts ? So had he, Matt. xxvi. 38.—Have we pains and tortures in our bodies ? So had he,

Matt. xxvii. 29, 30.—Are we derided and scoffed at ? So was he, Matt. xxvii. 31.—Are we arraigned or condemned, yea, do we suffer death itself ? It is no more than what our Lord and Master hath done before. And let us remember what he told us when he was upon the earth, *The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.* If we be Christ's disciples, we cannot expect to fare better in the world than Christ himself did; neither indeed can we fare so ill, for it is impossible that we should undergo so much for him as he hath undergone for us, ours being only the sufferings of men, his the sufferings of one who was God as well as man; whereby sufferings in general are sanctified to our human nature, it having already undergone them in the person of the Son of God, so that it can be now no disparagement at all to undergo any trouble, as hatred, reproach, poverty, pain, yea, death itself, or any other calamity whatsoever in this world, seeing the Son of God himself, He that made the world, underwent the same while himself was in it. And therefore we need not think it below us to stoop down and take up the cross of Christ, as considering that Christ, having borne it before us, hath so blessed and sanctified it unto us, that it is now become an honourable, an advantageous, yea, and a pleasant cross, to them that bear it patiently, thankfully, and constantly as they ought to do; especially seeing it is such a cross as leads unto a crown, and whatsoever we can do or suffer for Christ here, will be fully recompensed with glory hereafter; and therefore, instead of being troubled to take up our cross, we are rather to rejoice that we have any to take up. . . .

And let us not think that we shall deny ourselves any real pleasure or profit, by renouncing our sins; for what pleasure can we have in displeasing God, or profit in losing our own souls ? No; we shall gratify ourselves more than we can imagine, by denying ourselves, as much as we are able, whatsoever is offensive or displeasing unto God; for we may be sure, he that came into the world on purpose to save us from evil, commands us nothing but for our own good, neither would he ever have obliged us to deny ourselves, if we could have been saved without it; and as for the cross, that he was so well acquainted with, that he would never have imposed it upon us to



take it up, but that it is indispensably necessary for us. And therefore if we be what we pretend, real and true Christians, let us manifest it to the world and to our own consciences, by denying ourselves whatsoever Christ hath denied us, and by observing whatsoever he hath commanded us, even to the taking up of any cross, that he for his own sake shall suffer to be laid upon us, still remembering that self-denial, though it be unpleasant, is a most necessary duty; and the cross, though it be never so heavy, is but short, and hath nothing less than a crown annexed unto it, a glorious and eternal crown, which all those shall most certainly obtain, who thus deny themselves. **BP. BEVERIDGE.**

Now this is reason enough, and carries it beyond all other reason, why Christians are called to a suffering life, seeing the Lord and Author of that calling, suffered himself so much. *The Captain*, or Leader, of our salvation, as the Apostle speaks, was consecrated by suffering, Heb. ii. 10: that was the way by which he entered into the holy place, where he is now our everlasting High-Priest, making intercession for us. If he be our Leader to salvation, must not we follow him in the way he leads, whatsoever it is? If it be (as we see it is) by the way of sufferings, we must either follow on in that way, or fall short of salvation; for there is no other leader, nor any other way than that which he opened; so that there is not only a congruity in it, that his followers be conformed to him in suffering, but a necessity, if they will follow him on, till they attain to glory. And the consideration of both these, cannot but argue a Christian into a resolution for this royal way of suffering that leads to glory, through which their King and Lord himself went to his glory. It could hardly be believed at first that this was his way, and we can as hardly yet believe that it must be ours. *O fools, and slow of heart to believe! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into his glory?* Luke xxiv. 25, 26.

Would you be at glory, and will you not follow your Leader in the only way to it? Must there be another way cut out for you by yourself? O absurd! *Shall the servant be greater than his master?* John xiii. 16. Are not you fairly dealt with? If you have a mind to Christ, you shall have full as much of the world's good-will as he had: *if it hate you, he*

*bids you remember, how it hated him,* John xv. 18.

But though there were a way to do otherwise, would you not, if the love of Christ possessed your hearts, rather choose to share with him in his lot, and would you not find delight in the very trouble of it? Is not this conformity to Jesus, the great ambition of all his true-hearted followers? *We carry about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus*, says the great Apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 10. Besides the unspeakable advantage to come, which goes linked with this, that *if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him*, 2 Tim. ii. 12, there is a glory, even in this present resemblance, that we are conformed to the image of the Son of God in sufferings. Why should we desire to leave him? Are you not one with him? Can you choose but have the same common friends and enemies? Would you willingly, if it might be, could you find in your heart to be friends with that world which hated your Lord and Master? Would you have nothing but kindness and ease, where he had nothing but enmity and trouble? Or would you not rather, when you think aright of it, refuse and disdain to be so unlike him? As that good duke said, when they would have crowned him king of Jerusalem, 'No,' said he, 'by no means, I will not wear a crown of gold where Jesus was crowned with thorns.' . . .

It is a sweet, a joyful thing to be a sharer with Christ in any thing. All enjoyments wherein he is not, are bitter to a soul that loves him, and all sufferings with him are sweet. The worst things of Christ are more truly delightful than the best things of the world; his afflictions are sweeter than their pleasures, his reproach more glorious than their honours, and more rich than their treasures, as Moses accounted them, Heb. xi. 26. Love delights in likeness and communion, not only in things otherwise pleasant, but in the hardest and harshest things, which have not any thing in them desirable, but only that likeness. So that this thought is very sweet to a heart possessed with this love: What does the world by its hatred, and persecutions, and revilings for the sake of Christ, but make me more like him, give me a greater share with him, in that which he did so willingly undergo for me? 'When he was sought for to be made a king,' as St. Bernard remarks, 'he escaped; but when he was sought

to be brought to the cross, he freely yielded himself.' And shall I shrink and creep back from what he calls me to suffer for his sake? Yea, even all my other troubles and sufferings, I will desire to have stamped thus, with this conformity to the sufferings of Christ, in the humble, obedient, cheerful, endurance of them, and the giving up my will to my Father's.

LEIGHTON.

*Christ has consecrated to us the way of Suffering.*

THE Lord Christ, being consecrated and perfected through suffering, has consecrated the way of suffering for all that follow him in their march to glory. All complaints of sufferings, all despondencies under them, all fears of them in prospect, are rendered unjust and unreasonable by the sufferings of Christ. It is surely right that they should be contented with his lot here, who desire to be received into his glory hereafter. To elucidate the above observation, and to reconcile us to our lot of sufferings in following the Captain of our salvation, we should consider, that they are made necessary and unavoidable. The Apostle tells believers, that they are *predestinated to be conformed to the image of the Son of God*, Rom. viii. 29. And no small part of this conformity consists in their afflictions and sufferings. The Head having passed through them, there is a measure of afflictions belonging to the body, which every member is to bear his share of, 1 Cor. xii. 26. And the Lord Jesus himself has given us this law, that every one who will be his disciple must *take up his cross and follow him*. Discipleship and the cross are inseparably connected by the unchangeable law and constitution of Christ himself. And the Gospel is full of warnings and instructions to this purpose; that none may complain they are surprised, or that any thing did befall them in the course of their profession which they looked not for. Men may deceive themselves or others with vain hopes and expectations, but the Gospel deceives none; it tells them plainly beforehand, that *through much tribulation they must enter into the kingdom of God*, and that *they who will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions*. But we would be children, and not be chastised; we would be gold, and not be tried; we would overcome, and not be put to fight and contend; we would be Christians, and not suffer!

But all these things are contrary to the irrevocable law of our profession.

Again: All sufferings for the Gospel are now made honourable. The sufferings of Christ himself were indeed ignominious, and that not only in the esteem of men, but also in the nature of them, and by God's constitution. They were part of the *curse*, as it is written, *Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree*. And as such our Lord considered them, when he wrestled with and conquered the shame as well as the sharpness of them. But he has rendered all the sufferings of his people for his sake very honourable in themselves, whatever they are in the reputation of a blind and perishing world. Hence the Apostle rejoiced that they had the honour to *suffer shame for his name*, Acts v. 41. that is, the things which the world looked upon as shameful, but themselves knew to be honourable. When Moses came to make a right judgment concerning this matter, he *esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt*, Heb. xi. 26.

Beside, they are made useful and profitable. The Lord Jesus Christ, by consecrating our sufferings as our way of following him, has quite altered their nature and tendency; he has made them good, useful, and profitable. He has thereby cut them off from their old stock of wrath and the curse, and planted them on that of love and good-will. He has taken them off from the covenant of works, and translated them into that of grace. He has turned their course from death towards life and immortality; mixing his grace, love, and wisdom, with these *bitter waters*, he has made them sweet and wholesome. And if we would benefit by them, we must always have regard to this consecration of them.

He has also made them safe. Never did a believer perish by afflictions or persecutions; never was real gold or silver consumed or lost in this furnace. Hypocrites, indeed, and false professors, the fearful and unbelieving are discovered by them, and stripped of their hopes: but they that are disciples indeed, are never safer than in this way, and that because it is *consecrated* for them. Sometimes, it may be, through their unbelief, and want of heeding the Captain of their salvation, they are wounded and cast down by them for a season, but they are still in the way. Nay, it is not only absolutely a safe way, but comparatively more safe than the way of prosperity.

DR. J. OWEN.

*The most irreproachable are not proof against Calumny.*

THE most innocent and irreproachable behaviour is not sufficient to secure a good man against the envenomed darts of calumny and false accusations.

What could our blessed Saviour do more than he had done, to avoid the least suspicion of rebellion and seditious practices? When the people were for laying hold of him, in order to make him a king, as it were by force, he fled from them, John vi. 15. Nay, he even paid the tribute-money for himself and Peter, Matt. xvii. 27, and when, about four days before his passion, he was asked, Whether it was lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar or not, he returned this plain answer, *Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's*. Even his very enemies could not make the least exception against this wise decision in so ensnaring a dispute; but were astonished at his answer, and went away without saying a word, Luke xx. 26. But all this caution was not sufficient to secure our blessed Saviour from the false imputation of entertaining rebellious designs; for, notwithstanding all these appearances of the most resigned submission to the civil power, his enemies now charge him with perverting the people, forbidding them to pay tribute, and setting himself up for a king. If the great Captain of our salvation, our ever-glorious Head was thus basely treated, his members can certainly expect no better treatment from his and their inveterate enemies. Therefore, be of good courage, all ye that are determined to follow Christ as your Leader, and to walk innocently and unblameably amidst a perverse and wicked generation among whom ye live! Be assured, that all these precautions will not absolutely secure you against calumny, lies, and slanderous imputations. However, think not such treatment strange or uncommon; but comfort yourselves, since your blessed Chief was thus also treated, and be content in this also to be made like unto *The First-born among many brethren*.

RAMBACH.

*A clear Conscience the best Relief under Reproaches.*

A GOOD conscience is only in our own

power, but a good name is in the power of every slanderous tongue to blast; and indeed it is a thing almost impossible to keep at once both a good conscience and a good name too. The world is shattered and fractured into so many parties; and each of them of such different relishes of good and bad, that unless our actions have as universal a gust, as, according to the Rabbin's Tradition, the Israelites' manna had, that it had the taste of that which they best fancied, unless our actions have such a universal gust, we must of necessity fall under misconstructions, censures, and defamations; for indeed if you observe it, usually our similitude to others makes them think and speak well of us. Whosoever commends another, commends somewhat that he supposeth at least he hath in himself; and this the reason of that woe of our Saviour, *Woe to you when all men shall speak well of you*, Luke vi. 26. When wicked men speak well of us, it is a sign we are but too like them. Even a heathen could say, when he was highly applauded by the vulgar rout, 'What evil have I done, that these men praise me?' The very reproaches of ungodly men, are the best testimonials that can be given of an excellent and singular Christian. In a strict and holy conversation there is that contradiction to the loose profaneness of the world, as at once both convinceth and offends them, reproves them and galls them; and if we thus reprove them by our lives, we must again expect that they will reproach us by their lyings and slanders. It is a sinful tenderness of our esteem among men when we tuck about with every popular breath that blows; such must needs prefer the praise of men before the praise of God; and let me tell you, this is as fruitless as it is sinful, since as the wind always blows from contrary points and quarters, so while some extol us, others will as much vilify and scorn us. It is miserable to live upon the reports and opinions of others; let us not reckon what they say, but what reports our own consciences make us; it is far better to offend the whole world, than God and conscience. And if any storm of obloquy, reproach, railing, or bitter cursing at any time batters upon us, how sweet then is it to retire inward to the calm innocence of our own hearts, where are a thousand witnesses within us, that tell us we have not de-

served them! How comfortable is it to remit our cause to God, and leave our vindication to him for whose sake we suffer reproach! Thus we find the Prophet Jeremy appealing unto God: *I heard the defaming of many; report, say they, and we will report it*, Jer. xx. 10—12; that is, let us raise a disgraceful and a reproachful report of him: but, says he, *O Lord of Hosts, thou that triest the righteous, thou that testest the reins and the heart, unto thee have I opened my cause!* Why thus if while wicked men are maliciously conspiring how to blot, sully, and stain our names, if all this while we can keep our consciences clear, what need we much care how the wind blows abroad, since we are harboured under the retreat of a peaceful conscience? They may possibly persuade others to believe their calumnies; but God, who searcheth the heart and conscience, knows that we are injured, and he is hastening forward a day wherein he will clear up our righteousness; and then the testimony of one good conscience, will put ten thousand slanders to silence. **BR. HOPKINS.**

*Some Comforting and Profitable  
Reflections under Affliction.*

WHAT an effectual method the Lord takes to administer comfort to his people under all their losses and trials! He offers himself in the place of every thing taken away by him; which repairs the loss abundantly, and makes an exchange truly desirable. He does not promise friends or another husband to the widow, or to raise up an earthly parent to the fatherless,—though he often does these things; but his promises are more suitable to his own liberality and glory. *A father to the fatherless, and a judge of the widow, is God in his holy habitation. He relieveth the fatherless and widow. And in him the fatherless findeth mercy.* He takes them more immediately under his own protection and care; and he will make up their deficiency of outward comfort and blessings. Thus when he takes away an earthly, he gives them a heavenly blessing. When Christ commanded the young man in the Gospel to sell all that he had, he promised him *a treasure in heaven*. When he called Abraham to forsake his own country and kindred, he promised himself to be his shield and *exceeding great reward*. When

Joseph was separated from his friends, his father and his father's house, it is particularly added, *and the Lord was with Joseph*, that is, in an especial manner. He more peculiarly than heretofore, manifested himself to him, supported and comforted him, and gave him also favour in the eyes of all he had to do with. He made his dungeon a palace to him, and the very gate of heaven. Thus when God takes away any earthly comfort, he proposes an exchange for one that is heavenly and spiritual. He offers himself to us in the room of all. O blessed God, thou art enough. My soul is satisfied. . . .

How is it that I am not always rejoicing with exceeding great joy, when I suffer reproach for Christ, who in every condition, is with his people and is not ashamed of them? No unworthiness, no misery, shall prevent Christ from owning his people and openly avowing them to be his brethren. He is a brother born for adversity, a friend to the friendless and fatherless. He is ashamed of none but those who are ashamed of him, however unworthy and miserable they may be. His people are often the offscouring of all things: the world rejects, persecutes, and hates them; but their elder Brother, the Lord of glory, is not ashamed of them. Let the world and the men of the world take their course and do their worst; let the devil rage and the powers of hell be stirred up in fury against them; loaded with reproaches and scorn, covered all over with the filth and dirt of false accusations, in rags, in dungeons, and in the most shameful deaths,—Christ is not ashamed of them; nay, he owns them and says, *Surely, these are my brethren, the children of my Father*. He will not pass them by in poverty and want: no, but he will own them and glory in them. And shall I be ashamed of Christ, of his Gospel, or of any that bear his name? God forbid. He came into prison and into the furnace to own us; it cost him all he was worth; being rich, *for our sakes he became poor*; he lost his life in the most shameful manner in our cause; being the eternal God, blessed for ever, holy, powerful, and all-sufficient in himself, he is not ashamed of us poor worms of the earth, but owns us as his brethren: and can it be that I should ever be ashamed of him? Yet nothing but grace can enable me to profess and own him before a gainsaying world. **REV. T. CHARLES.**

I see God in every thing; in pain I feel him, and know he is come near to me on some gracious design. I never have so lively a sense of the being, presence, and goodness of God, as in pain, sickness, and suffering; it puts me on thinking, and I cannot avoid coming to this conclusion, that it is ordained by his immediate will, and that he does it in mercy.

Instead of repining at bodily disorders, think how many have much greater, and how to be thankful both for those you have and have not. Pain, affliction, &c., is only God's speaking louder. . . .

In pain, sickness, trouble, methinks I hear God saying, Take this medicine, exactly suited to the case, prepared and weighed by my own hands, and consisting of the choicest drugs which heaven affords. . . .

How can I be happy but in God? And how can I be in God with a will contrary to, or but indifferent to his? No quiet in the Spirit till we settle on this basis of rest and satisfaction; acquiescence in the will of God; contentedness under the accidents of life; patience with the humours of all about us; and cheerful submission to the demands of the present hour.

God, who knows my state, and the danger I am in, sends pain to warn me of it, to make me dread sin more than pain, and to think how I shall ever be able to endure remediless, everlasting pain.

Suffering is an excellent preacher, sent immediately from heaven, to speak aloud in the name of God to the heart, mind, and conscience, and has saved many a soul, when, humanly speaking, nothing else could. If it was not for pain I should spend less time with God. . . .

In affliction see the necessity of it, and be humbled; see the use of it, and improve it; see the love there is in it, and be thankful. I know of no greater blessing than health, except pain and sickness. . . .

However I am crossed, or whatever I suffer, God does me no wrong, intends me no hurt, designs my good. I may well be patient. I must do more; there is obligation in the case; I must be thankful. . . .

God does not regard what he makes us suffer, if he can but keep us out of hell. When I am in pain, I have a strong conviction of my obligation to Christ for delivering me from eternal pain.

Then pain comes, God comes. Wel-

come pain. We should bear pain better if we did not increase it by impatience, or apprehension of the issue, and suffer nothing but the pain. . . .

Come what will, God does me no harm. If God has given me Christ, what have I to complain of; and how should I welcome the disease, or decay, which is sent to secure him to me, and bring me to him! . . .

When pain comes, I can hardly think of any thing but God; when I am at ease, the heart returns to its bent, the world resumes its place in it, and God leaves me.

God consults my interest in every thing, not me; and though I know he cannot be mistaken in what he does, I find it hard to give my consent to it.

When pain comes, it seems as if it was reached out to me by the hands of an angel who is come post with it from heaven; glad of the office of administering to my safety and improvement; rejoicing in the love of God towards me, and calling on me to join with him in blessing God for it.

God is always with me, though I am not with him; and because I do not advert to his presence, he sends pain to introduce and even force me into his company. . . .

I never have such a lively and full conviction of my weakness and absolute dependence on God, as in pain or sickness. Acquiescence in his blessed will, choice of what he chooses for me, and thankfulness for the mercy, I know to be my duty, and would gladly work this disposition in myself, but find, by repeated experience, that I have no more power over my mind than I have over my body.

By pain God drives me to prayer, teaches me what prayer is, inclines me to pray. . . .

If we do not propose to ourselves the same end in suffering which God does, self-knowledge and the purification of the heart, it must necessarily be without effect.

Because I trifle with my soul, and do not enter resolutely into a process of mortification, God, in mercy, takes the matter into his own hands, and sends pain to do that for me, which I am not willing to do for myself.

God sometimes will not let me sleep, but keeps me awake to catechise me; and is always ready with some new instruction or conviction. . . .

When I suffer most, I will comfort myself with thinking that I might, and that many

do, suffer more; and that all I can suffer is not only much less than I deserve, but ordained in mercy as the means of my eternal happiness.

Trouble is the engine in God's hands to lift us up to heaven.

REV. T. ADAM.

*Comforting Thoughts for the Weak and Languishing Christian in Sickness.*

AND are you very weak? is sickness in the chamber; and death at the door? Come then, let us both sit down with dissolution and eternity in view; and encourage one another from the word, the precious word of God. I have as much need of such consolations as you, and may, perhaps, have occasion to use them as soon.

What is there formidable in death, which our ever blessed Redeemer has not taken away? Do the pangs of dissolution alarm us? should they be sharp, they cannot be very long; and our exalted Lord, with whom are the issues of death, knows what dying agonies mean. He has said, in the multitude of his tender mercies, *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness*, Isa. xli. 10. This promise authorizes us to say boldly, *Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff comfort me*, Psal. xxiii. 4.

Are we afraid to enter into a strange, invisible, unknown world? It is the world, into which our divine Master is gone; where he has prepared everlasting mansions (John xiv. 2. Luke xvi. 22) for his people, and has appointed his angels to conduct us thither. Having such a convoy, what should we dread? and, going to our eternal home, where our all-bountiful Redeemer is, why should we be reluctant?

Are we concerned, on account of what we leave? We leave the worse to possess the better. If we leave our earthly friends, we shall find more loving and lovely companions. We shall be admitted among the innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and church of the first-born, that are written in heaven, Heb. xii. 22, 23. Do we leave the ordinances of religion, which we have attended with

great delight? leave the word of God which has been sweeter to our souls than honey to our mouths? We shall enter into the temple not made with hands, and join that happy choir, who *rest not day nor night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come*, Rev. iv. 8. And if our Bible is no more, we shall have all that is promised, we shall behold all that is described therein. If we drop the map of our heavenly Canaan, it will be to take possession of its blissful territories. *That city has no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God does lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof*, Rev. xxi. 23. O! blessed, for ever blessed be the grace of our God, and the merits of his Christ! We shall exchange the scanty stream for the boundless ocean; and if we no longer pick the first ripe grapes, we shall gather the copious, the abounding, the never-ending vintage.

Do we fear the guilt of our innumerable sins? Adored be the inexpressible loving-kindness of God our Saviour! Our sins have been punished in the blessed Jesus: *The Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all*, Isa. liii. 6. *He his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree*, 1 Pet. ii. 24. *So that there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*, Rom. viii. 1. O that we may be enabled, with the Apostle, to make our boast of this Saviour, and to triumph in this faith! *Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us.*

Is judgment the thing that we fear? To the pardoned sinner it has nothing terrible. The Lord Jesus, who keeps his servants from falling, *presents them also faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy*, Jude ver. 24. Observe the sweet expressions, *presents faultless, and with exceeding joy*. Justly, therefore, does the Apostle reckon it among the privileges of the Christians, that they are come to God the Judge of all, Heb. xii. 23; for the Judge is our friend, the Judge is our advocate, the Judge is our propitiation, the Judge is our righteousness. And is it not a privilege to come to such a judge, as will not so

much as mention our iniquities to us, but condescend to take notice of our poor unworthy services; who sits on the great tribunal, not to pass the sentence of damnation upon us, but to give us a reward; a reward of free grace, and of inconceivable richness?

Let me conclude with those charming words of the evangelical prophet, *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned; for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins*, Isa. xl. 1, 2. May the God of our life and salvation make these Scriptures be unto us, as a staff in the traveller's hand, and as a cordial to the fainting heart, that we may be strong in the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ; that we may glorify him in death, and glorify him for death; because death will introduce us into his immediate presence, where we shall be sorrowful no more, sinful no more, at a distance no more; but be joyful, and be like our Lord; love him with all our souls, praise him to all eternity.

REV. J. HERVEY.

*Some Considerations against Fretfulness at the Delays of Providence.*

DURING the delays of Providence, the hearts and hopes of the people of God may be very low, and much discouraged. The causes of these despondencies are partly from ourselves, and partly from Satan. If we duly examine our own hearts about it, we shall find that these sinkings of heart are the immediate effects of unbelief. We do not depend and rely upon the word, with that full confidence that is due to the infallible word of a faithful and unchangeable God. Faith is the only cordial that relieves the heart against these faintings and despondencies; where this is wanting or is weak, no wonder that our hearts sink when discouragements are before us.—Our judging things by the rules of sense is a great cause of our discouragements. We conclude, that according to the appearances of things will be their issues. In all these things Satan carries a design upon us. Hence he takes occasion to suggest hard thoughts of God, and to beat off our souls from all confidence in him, and expectations from him; and his suggestions gain the more credit with us because they are con-

firmed and attested by sense and feeling.

To assist the soul in this difficulty, I shall offer some farther help, beside what has been already given under the first caution, in the following considerations. Though Providence do not yet perform the mercies you wait for, yet you have no ground to entertain hard thoughts of God; for it is possible God never gave you any ground for your expectation of these things from him. It may be you have no promise to found your hope upon; and if so, why shall God be suspected and dishonoured by you in a case wherein his truth and faithfulness were never engaged to you? If we are crossed in our outward concerns, and see our expectations of prosperity dashed; if we see such or such an outward comfort removed, from which we promised ourselves much; why must God be accused for this? These things you promised yourselves; but where did God promise you prosperity and the continuance of those comfortable things to you? Produce his promise, and shew wherein he hath broken it. It is not enough for you to say, there is a general promise in the Scripture, that *God will withhold no good thing*, for that promise has its limitations; it is expressly limited to such as *walk uprightly*. It concerns you then to examine whether you have done so, before you quarrel with Providence for non-performance of it. Search thine own heart; reflect upon thine own ways. Seest thou not so many flaws in thine integrity, so many turnings aside from God, both in heart and life, that may justify God not only in withholding what thou lookest for, but in removing all that thou enjoyest? And besides this limitation as to the object, this promise is limited in the matters or things promised, by the wisdom and will of God, which is the only rule by which they are measured out to men in this world, that is, such mercies, in such proportions as he sees needful and most conducive to your good; and these given out in such times and seasons as are of his own appointment, not yours. God never came under an absolute, unlimited tie for outward comforts to any of us; and if we are disappointed, we can blame none but ourselves. Who bid us expect rest, ease, delight in this world? He has never told us we shall be rich, healthy, and at ease in our habitations; but on the contrary, he has often told us,

that we must expect troubles in the world, and that through much tribulations we must enter into his kingdom. All that he stands bound to us by promise for, is to be with us in trouble; and to sanctify all his providences to our good at last. But if you say you have long waited upon God for spiritual mercies, and still those mercies are deferred, and your eyes fail whilst you look for them; I would desire you seriously to consider of what kind those spiritual mercies are, for which you have so long waited upon God. Spiritual mercies are of two sorts; such as belong to the essence, the very being of the new creature, without which it must fail; or its well-being, and the comfort of the inner man, without which you cannot live so cheerfully as you would. The mercies of the former kind are absolutely necessary, and therefore put into absolute promises; but for the rest they are dispensed to us in such measures, and at such seasons as the Lord sees fit, and many of his own people live for a long time without them. The gift and continuance of the Spirit to quicken, sanctify, and unite us with Christ, is necessary; but his joys and comforts not so. A child of light may walk in darkness. He lives by faith, and not by feeling.—You complain, that Providence delays to perform to you the mercies you have prayed and waited for; but have you right ends in your desires after these mercies? The want of a good aim is the reason why we want good success in our prayers. It may be that we pray for prosperity, and our end is to please the flesh; we beg and wait for deliverance from such a trouble or affliction, not that we may be the more prepared for obedience, but freed from what is grievous to us, and destroys our pleasure in the world. You wait for good, and it comes not; but is your will brought to a due submission to the will of God about it? Certainly God will have you come to this before you enjoy your desires. Enjoyment of your desires is the thing that will please you, but resignation of your wills is that which is pleasing to God. If your hearts cannot come to this, mercies cannot come to you. Your betters have waited long upon God for mercy, and why should not you? David waited till his eyes failed, Psa. lxxix. 3. Are you better than all the saints that are gone before you? They have quietly waited, and why should not you?—Shall you lose any thing by patient waiting upon God

for mercies? Certainly not; yea, this will turn to a double advantage to you; for though you do not yet enjoy the good you wait for, yet all this while you are exercising your grace; and it is more excellent to exercise grace than to enjoy comfort. And whenever the desired mercy comes, it will be so much the sweeter to you. Are not the mercies you expect from God worth the waiting for? If not, it is your folly to be troubled for the want of them; if they are, why do not you continue waiting? Is it not all that God expects from you, for the mercies he bestows upon you, that you wait upon him for them? You know that you have not deserved the least of them at his hands. You expect them not as a recompense, but a free favour, and, if so, then certainly the least you can do is, to wait upon his pleasure for them. Consider how many promises are made in the word to waiting souls. One Scripture calls them *blessed that wait for him*; another tells us, that *none that wait for him shall be ashamed*; and shall we faint in the midst of so many cordials as are prepared to revive us in these promises? How long has God waited upon you? You have made God wait long for your reformation and obedience; and therefore have no reason to think it much, if God makes you wait long for your consolation. If God wait upon you with so much patience for your duties, well may you wait upon him for his mercies. This impatience of yours, expressed in your weariness to wait any longer, as it is a great evil in itself, so very probably it is that evil which obstructs the way of your expected mercies; you might have your mercies sooner, if your spirits were quieter and more submissive.

FLAVEL.

*Heaven will fully recompense for all our Trials.*

WHAT a transcendent joy, yea, ravishing, will overrun the hearts of saints when, after so many conflicts, temptations, and afflictions, they arrive in glory, and are harboured in heaven, where they shall rest for ever! The Scripture saith, *They shall sing the song of Moses, and of the Lamb.* The song of Moses was a triumphant song composed for the celebration of that glorious deliverance at the Red Sea. The saints are now fluctuating upon a troublesome and tempestuous sea; their hearts sometimes ready to sink, and die within



them, at the apprehension of so many and great dangers and difficulties. Many a hard storm they ride out, and many straits and troubles they here encounter with, but at last they arrive at their desired and long-expected haven, and then heaven rings and resounds with their joyful acclamations. And how can it be otherwise, when as soon as ever they set foot upon that glorious shore, Christ himself meets and receives them with a *Come ye blessed of my Father*. O joyful voice! O much desired word! What tribulation would not a man undergo for this word's sake!...

Cheer up then, O my soul; thy salvation is now nearer than when thou first believedst, and it will not now be long ere I receive the end of my faith; and then it will be sweet to reflect even upon these hardships in the way. Yet a few days more, and then comes that blessed day thou hast so long waited and panted for. Oppose the glory of that day, O my soul, to thy present sufferings, as blessed Paul did, Rom. viii. 18; and thou shalt see how it will shrink them all up to nothing. Oppose the inheritance thou shalt receive in that day, to thy losses for Christ now; and see how joyfully it will make thee bear them; Heb. x. 34. Oppose the honour that will be put upon thee in that day, to thy present reproaches, and see how easy it will make them to thee; 1 Cor. iv. 5. What condition can I be in, wherein the believing thoughts of this blessed day cannot relieve me? Am I poor? here is that which answers poverty. *Hearken, my beloved brethren; Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom?* James ii. 5. Am I tempted? here is relief against that: *Now is come salvation and strength; for the accuser of our brethren is cast down*, Rev. xii. 10.

Am I deserted? here is a remedy for that too: *And there shall be no night there*, Rev. xxii. 5. Come, then, my soul, let us enter upon our inheritance by degrees, and begin the life of heaven upon earth.

FLAVEL.

*Our present Trials shall end in Praise.*

In all your afflictions believe a safe issue, that you shall get well out of all: *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all*, Psalm xxxiv. 19. *These are they which came out of great tribulation*, says

the angel to John, Rev. vii. 14. There is no affliction can enter heaven, but I believe the best talking of affliction that ever was, is in heaven. All the glorified in heaven understand better all God's way with them. They were, many of them, plagued every morning, and chastened every moment; their souls were filled with bitterness and sorrow all their life long; yet there is never a one there, but sees that every thing was well done, there was nothing that they could have been without; their guide guided them well, and there is nothing amiss, nothing crooked in all God's way. It is with respect to this, that the Apostle calls to believers to *rejoice*, though in the midst of *manifold temptations*; why so? knowing that the *trial of your faith*, shall turn to *praise*, 1 Pet. i. 6, 7. *Ye are in heaviness, through manifold temptations*, that is, as to the things of sense; but, says the Apostle, *ye rejoice with joy unspeakable*, as Christians; and wherefore rejoice in the midst of heaviness? Because your faith, though much exercised now, will make a glorious appearance at the last day. One of the greatest praises that can be given to the Lord by his people, is, that their faith glorified his faithfulness, whilst on earth, in the midst of their greatest distress.

REV. R. TRAILL.

*Strength to bear Affliction must be provided beforehand.*

STRENGTH to bear affliction must not only shew itself in time of affliction, but it must be provided beforehand; we must be well-appointed and furnished with strength against the time of trouble, which must shew itself in bearing of it with patience. The Apostle's words are very direct and plain: he saith, we must be strengthened unto patience. And this is further cleared, Ephes. vi. 10, where the Apostle exhorteth to *be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*; and presently, in the next words subjoins, that we must be armed, and at all points provided, and *put on the complete armour of God, that we may be able to stand against the assaults of the devil*; And ver. 13; *For this cause*, saith he, *take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to resist in the evil day*: that is, either of temptation or affliction. It is worthy observation, to this purpose, that our Saviour saith, *possess your souls in patience*, Luke xxi. 19. Patience and strength to bear afflictions

must be ours, not by usurpation, nor yet by lawful use and occupation, as a thing borrowed for the present; but by just title and possession, we must have it of our own, we must be provided of it to use when time shall serve.

And the reason and ground of this is, because we cannot have it at any time when we please. The very light of nature teacheth men to provide things of special use beforehand, which they cannot easily come by, when occasion serves to use them.

Now, because the word *provide* is a word of implication, and implies the use of means, for provision is made by means, some may desire more special direction in this case, what means may be used to furnish themselves with strength against the time of trouble and affliction. For the satisfying of their desire, let them know, that the means are not only general, as the word, prayer, &c., serving to work and increase any grace in them; but there be two things that particularly serve as special means to this purpose, to furnish us and give us possession of strength against the time of trouble and affliction.

The first is a frequent and serious consideration of the manner of tenure, in what sort we hold and enjoy the good things of this life, health, wealth, and such like; that it is conditional, that we hold them with condition of the cross, with a limitation of God's correction. We must often think on it, that the promise made that such as fear the Lord shall eat the good things of the land, is with condition of the Lord's trial and correction that they shall eat them, unless it please the Lord otherwise to try and correct them.

Again, we are often to meditate on the immutability of God's love; that his love never changeth, but he is the same good God when he afflicteth us, as when he prospereth any of his children. If we persuade ourselves that we are within the compass of his special love, we must often think upon it, that his love is without change, and that whom he loves once he loves for ever. He may change our estate as seems good to him, from prosperity to adversity, but he is the same good God; good before affliction, good in affliction, and ever good to his children.

And if this be thought upon and settled, it will furnish our hearts with a notable measure of Christian courage and forti-

tude: we shall find ourselves enabled with Job's strength, to bear the greatest affliction, Job xiii. 15. These two things then must be thought upon and remembered, that our hold of the good things of this life is conditional, and that God's love is unchangeable, and we shall then be provided of strength against the time of trial and affliction: and know withal, that for want of this preparation, when affliction comes, we shall either grow impatient and seek unlawful means, or else have, it may be, a boldness, but a desperate boldness, without all comfort, such as is commonly in cowards; who, being put to an exigent, are sometimes rashly bold, and desperately hardy. But we shall not be able to be bold with consideration, as the Preacher hath told us, *In the day of wealth be of good comfort, and in the day of affliction consider*, Eccles. vii. 14—that is, consider the author and use of thy affliction. Let us then often think upon our hold of the good things of this life, and the immutability of God's love, that so we may be strengthened to bear, with consideration, the greatest affliction.

REV. E. ELTON.

#### *Against the Indulgence of Fear in seasons of Trials and Difficulties.*

CHARGE your consciences solemnly with the authority of the Divine command to suppress your fears. Remember that the exercises of faith, courage, and holy firmness of soul, are duties as well as blessings. Read how often the great God forbids his people to indulge their fears, Isa. xli. 10, 13, 14. xliii. 1—5. xliv. 2—8. *Fear not*, is a command perpetually repeated because God well knew how prone or feeble natures are to be affrighted at eve appearance of danger. And even when he calls his people *Jacob a worm*, and confesses the extreme weakness of their nature under that emblem, yet he insists on the same precepts still, *Fear not, thou wor Jacob*, Isa. xli. 14.

Our blessed Lord joins frequently in the same prohibition of a slavish fear, Matt. x. 28. *Fear not them who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but fear him, rather, who can destroy body and soul in hell*. And Peter, who once wanted courage, and denied his Lord, in his elder and better days, grew bolder for the name of Christ, and he forbids us *to be afraid or troubled at the terror of men*, 1 Pet. iii.

14. He repeats the charge of the Prophet Isaiah, *Sanctify the Lord of hosts in your heart*; the Lord of hosts alone is the proper object of our supreme fear. This will over-rule and abolish all other fears, as the little noises of earth are lost in the thunders of heaven. The fear of God, in a sublime degree, will be an effectual cure of our sinful fear of creatures.

It is true, the principle of fear is a natural affection, it is rooted in flesh and blood, it grows high and domineers, especially in some constitutions, and when the natural spirits are enfeebled, it still gains the greater ascendancy over us. But if it be indulged and encouraged, it soon becomes sinful, for it seems to stand opposite to the grace of faith, and too often prevails over it. Therefore Christ chides his dis-

ciples, when they were affrighted in the storm, while he was in the ship: *Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?* Mark iv. 40. And even when Peter was walking upon the water, and Christ was near him, he saith, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt,* Matt. xiv. 31. For a Christian to give himself up to the wild tyranny of his fears is contrary to the very spirit and design of the Gospel of Christ. *Ye have not received the spirit of bondage to fear, but the spirit of adoption, the spirit of power and love,* Rom. viii. 15. Remember then you are the sons and daughters of God. It is below the dignity of your character to yield to this slavery, and your Father himself reproves, and your Redeemer forbids it.

DA. WATTS.

THE END.















